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The Dragon

*A Thesis Exploration of Fairy Tales, Comedy,
Beauty, and Wonder
or
What Happens When a Virus Shuts Down Your Production?*

Presented to the Graduate Council
University of Portland

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree
Master of Fine Arts in Directing

by **Angela Joy Van Epps**
April 2020

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A Fairy Tale Beginning

Gratitude

My abundant heartfelt gratitude goes to many people, places, and resources for bringing my dreams to life. I am delighted to name them all in memory of their impact on this project.

This show would not have had space if not for the University of Portland and the Performing Fine Arts department's Mago Hunt theater. Many thanks to this program for including this production in their season, for providing the opportunity to rehearse in the actual theater (a novelty in the professional world), and for supporting me in every way they were able in my exploration. Especial thanks to Prof. Gregory Pulver for producing, Dr. Mead Hunter for guiding this paper, and to Prof. Larry Larsen, Prof. Sue Bonde, Dr. Lezlie Cross, Prof. Mindi Logan, Prof. Hal Logan, and Eric Lyness for their faculty support. Gold stars to my student actors, student designers, and audience. Prof. Allen Hansen was a hero in making all of my shadow puppet dreams come true with the aid of his skills and the Shiley School of Engineering's Maker Space. Ariel Lauryn, you have my deep gratitude for bringing to life our dragon, both in shadows and in actuality.

All my love goes to Chase, my incredibly supportive husband. My love, you have truly supported me in my adventures. I could not have possibly attempted this adventure without you. I'll Eat You Up. I'm looking forward to our ongoing adventures together.

This show would not have been possible without Lady Augusta Gregory, a beacon from times past and places far. It is beautiful to celebrate the work of a kindred spirit, someone enamored with fairy tales, the comedy of humanity, and a fellow admirer of squirrel hearts and vegetarian dragons. May her work continue to be explored.

Once Upon a Time...

For surely every fairy tale begins with an invitation. And what is this thesis but a chapter of my own fairy tale?

Once Upon a Time there was a graduate student, searching for a thesis play. She read many plays, by different playwrights, some alive and nearby, others long dead and from lands far away. She read comedies. She read bittersweet tales of regrets and misadventures. She read a very campy play written in the 1950s about a school for witches. She searched for plays based on words that interested her, like ghosts, grief, and gardens. She spent long afternoons dreaming about which play would be the one to capture her heart.

One summer day she stumbled across a play called The Dragon. “Ah,” she thought, “I do love dragons. And Lady Gregory is such an enchanting name.” At that point she had never heard of Lady Gregory. The play was a small hardcover book, dusty and forgotten. As she read, her interest blossomed, each plot twist surprising and delighting her. Here was a story of a princess, a prophesy, and a dragon. As she finished it for the first time, a spark was lit in her heart. She read it again, and she started imagining how she would tell this story.

Here was a quest worth starting. A story the grad student could chase. A wonder play. A fairy tale first, a comedy second; a story that Lady Gregory also called “The Awakening of a Soul” and “A Change of Heart.” And so, the grad student gathered her team for the quest.

This thesis chronicles her adventure toward fairy tales, comedy, beauty, and wonder.

Introducing Our Villain

While I am certain that this will not be the only thesis interrupted by the Coronavirus or COVID-19, it is important for me to preface this work with a brief description of what this virus has done to this process. While I write this, there are still so many unknowns, and though more will be made clear in time, it is already apparent that the damage done by this virus, and the mandated responses, has compromised theaters near and far in such a way that it will take time and intentional choices to heal.

The first time I heard “Coronavirus” was while getting a coffee on campus. Two nursing students were discussing the virus, and how they were surprised that nobody was worried yet. I think I Googled it and was unconcerned. A month later, everyone was talking about it, but I still didn’t think that my production would be impacted. I mentioned to my actors to take make healthy choices, something I tell all of my actors as tech week approaches. I happened to be in a class titled “The Healing Power of Plants” as my final elective, so I added in suggestions of which teas and foods could prevent my actors from catching anything and to shorten the length of sickness. I gave them tea and moved on.

It wasn’t until our final week of tech that there began to be a question of *if* the show would happen. My family flew in, the show opened, and the very next morning I had an email that all events on campus, in addition to classes, were cancelled, rescheduled, or moved online. Shortly after state and federal governments issued new rules about the size of gatherings that were acceptable, starting around 250 and getting as low as no non-family gatherings allowed. My grief was not alone. Thousands of shows suffered closures. Some had just begun rehearsals; others were cancelled at their final dress rehearsal. Hours and months of work by actors,

directors, designers, and those who make the arts their lives and livelihood, cancelled as the world paused.

My heart is full that at least I had one audience, full of family, friends, and complete strangers, and what a beautiful response they had. This has been enough to carry me through the sadness of a cancellation. Plays are alive for a fleeting moment, brought to life by a group willing to pour themselves into the story, so that an audience, be they many or few, can exist with that story for a breath-filled moment. That's the magic of theater. And though my moment with this group for this show was interrupted, I believe that this will not be the last time I help bring this show to life. Though many live in fear today, I have faith that love casts out fear, and that we will not only get through this, but that we will be bolstered to live more intentionally. Although healing and recovery for theater artists, companies, and universities may be slow, it will come. For what are humans without stories?

Research

*As the grad student charted her journey, she realized that there were whole areas on her map that she knew little to nothing about, and others that she knew much about but still possessed a lingering curiosity for. She sought out books, experts, and knowledge to aid her on her quest. Her biggest curiosities at the beginning of the quest were Lady Gregory and the production history of *The Dragon*. As time passed, she also sought knowledge of Art Nouveau, Irish History, and Fairy Tales as a medium.*

What details would she need to accurately tell this story? Who was the last person to tell this story? How should this story look and feel?

Lady Augusta Gregory



Figure 1: Augusta, Lady Gregory, 1911 by George C. Beresford

Many remember Lady Gregory foremost for her contribution as a playwright. Though her writing was prolific—she wrote or translated 38 plays—and very popular, it was not her sole theatrical offering (Saddlemeyer 107). She knew every aspect of the Abbey, from the charwomen

who cleaned, to the actors and playwrights, and even the orchestra members. She produced, critiqued productions, selected which plays should move forward, and was involved in the financial aspect of the theater as well (Gregory 52). She was one of the founding members of the Abbey Theatre, and she was also one of the first three directors there, named with W. B. Yeats and J. M. Synge (Adams 33).

Lady Gregory would bake enormous barmbracks, which are festive bread and cake hybrids, chicken pies, and other filling treats for opening nights and other long days for her actors at the Abbey. While some saw this as a remnant of lady-of-the manor behavior, others insist that her intentions were pure. She knew how much money the theater was paying these actors, and that they didn't have much to live on. She recognized that they often weren't eating enough and wanted to feed them what she could. She baked to offer them her support in the love language of food (Coxhead 96).

Her playwriting logic is enjoyable. While she had no qualms about selecting tragedies to be produced at the Abbey, her main interest was comedy. She commented, "All the young writers are so busy writing tragedy that I shall have to go on, as I am the only one old enough to laugh" (Mikhail 43). W. B. Yeats, longtime friend of Lady Gregory, co-founder of the Abbey, and playwright poet, said of her plays:

Lady Gregory alone writes out of a spirit of pure comedy, and laughs without bitterness and with no thought but to laugh. She has a perfect sympathy with her characters, even with the worst of them, and when the curtain goes down we are so far from the mood of judgement that we do not even know that we have condoned many sins (Saddlemyer 31).

Yeats was able to recognize that part of her genius was in reaching her audience. Wouldn't every playwright like it if the audience was able to learn, through the empathy of their plays, to be more accepting? Even better if they can do it through laughter.

Directing and leading came naturally to Lady Gregory, perhaps because she cared for her actors so deeply. While Yeats intentionally cultivated an antagonistic relationship to the actors (Hill 267), Lady Gregory would quietly give her opinion (Maresh 47). When one of the single actresses came to see her about an unpleasant contract change, Lady Gregory advocated for her (Gregory 85). Lady Gregory was advised to choose popular plays because they would draw in larger audiences, but her goal was to educate the audience through their plays (Adams 33).

The audience was of great importance to Lady Gregory:

I can't be away from the theatre when new plays are on. I must see not only how the play succeeds, but also how the audience succeeds. That is even more important. Audiences change nightly, so it is a new play to me every time I attend the performance. The company remembers the audiences, too (Mikhail 69).

On occasions when she noticed that the audience was sparse, she would sometimes exit the theater by one door, only to walk around and re-enter, in the hopes that people lingering outside the theater would take that as encouragement and go in to get a ticket (Kohfeldt 184).

Lady Gregory was able to clearly articulate what the Abbey's mission was. In her journals she recounted part of a speech she had given:

Three is the number of perfection—body, soul and spirit; father, mother, child; the three leaves of the shamrock, the threefold cord that is not quickly broken. In the Theatre we have the three A's, interdependent, inseparable—Author, Actor, Audience. We are necessary to one another. And I said at the end that if these three hold together I hope the Abbey will last into the far future and leave a fine tradition (Gregory 93).

Lady Gregory would be pleased to know that the Abbey is still a well-recognized, thriving establishment. There have been so few women in management there; it took fifty years after her death for the Abbey to appoint another female board of director (Maresh 66). Only three women since Lady Gregory's career have been named artistic directors at the Abbey (Maresh ii). She never spoke of women's rights publicly or in her journal, but in her quiet actions and through her career at the Abbey she clearly held the female perspective valuable. She was a remarkable woman.

I keep returning to her quote, "All the young writers are so busy writing tragedy that I shall have to go on, as I am the only one old enough to laugh." (Mikhail 43). I believe in our recovery from the fright of Coronavirus, many will be tempted to find solace in tragedy. I will hold on to comedy, and the relief that laughter brings.

Production History of *The Dragon*

The Dragon premiered at the Abbey Theatre in Dublin, Ireland on Monday, April 21, 1919 and ran for eight performances. The show was popular enough to be revived on Monday, August 25 for three shows only. Then, in 1922 *The Dragon* yet again roared to life at the Abbey, for six performances starting on Tuesday, January 24. The last time *The Dragon* graced the Abbey was in September of 1923 for a final seven performances. Thus there were 24 opportunities to see *The Dragon* at the theatre where Lady Gregory was a founding member (Abbey Theatre Archive).

The opening cast was composed of the Abbey's finest. Scenic designer J. F. Barlow played the Dragon, and undoubtedly constructed the puppet. Maureen Delany played the

nurse. Delany trained at the Abbey School of Acting and went on to play Maisie Madigan in *Juno and the Paycock* and Bessie Burgess in *The Plough and the Stars*. In 1959 she was nominated for a Tony award for playing Carrie Donovan in *God and Kate Murphy* (IBDB). Brothers Arthur Shields and Barry Fitzgerald (born William Shields) played King Manus and the King. Only three actors changed from the premier to the first revival, that of the Queen, the Nurse, and the Porter (Abbey Theatre Archive).

Radcliffe and Harvard joined forces to put on *The Dragon* in 1920. The *Radcliff News* publication reported on November 19, 1920:

In the cast for "The Dragon", by Lady Gregory, which has been selected for the annual production of the Harvard Dramatic Club, are the following Radcliffe undergraduates: Princess, Dorothy Googins '22; nurse, Mildred Ellis '21; aunts, Eleanor McCormack '21 and Marjorie Toland '21; queen, Katherine MacLarine '21, and Elizabeth Gatlin '23.

In December of 1920 the review came out for this production which toured to local colleges.

Article writers were not credited for the *Radcliffe News* at that time, but our unknown journalist seemed to be impressed by the show:

The appeal of "The Dragon" is ' a popular appeal; where it differs is that, unlike the average popular appeal, it conquers by its sheer humanity. Dialogue as full-flavored as a nut or an apple was Synge's demand, and one is certain Synge would take off his hat to "The Dragon". Humor is the note of the play, but it does not exclude the gallant swagger of romance, and when the cook sallies forth to fight the dragon, and the timid Prince of the Marshes hands to his rival the magic leaves that restore the Princess to life, the right note is struck by a master hand. Lady Gregory has adopted and improved on the comedy inventions of the old tales. The aunts, whose life mission is to keep the Prince of the Marshes wrapped in cotton wool, are superb, and the conversion of the dragon to vegetarianism is a stroke of genius.

The article concludes that there was a student discount for Harvard and Radcliffe students (\$1.65) and that there would be a dance to follow after the performances at Cambridge and Wellesley (Harvard Dramatics).

Community theaters were the next to put on *The Dragon*. In 1922 a production of *The Dragon* was produced on a golf course in Connecticut. "The first tee of the Golf Course, backed by a group of splendid locust trees, was used as the stage the audience sitting on the fairway, under the stars, the performance having been given at night" (Kehoe).

The Evanston Community Theatre Association in Illinois opened *The Dragon* in July of 1923. It was written about in *The Drama Magazine* as wildly enjoyed by children and deemed amusing to the adults. Miss Winnifred Ward directed. "The whole production was set in a weird, unreal key and lovely costumes of no time or place and of every color and scheme, were planned by the Russian artist, George Duberg" (The Evanston Community Theatre). Lighting was used to enhance the battle with the dragon, which was staged out a window in the set. "The dragon itself, executed by Miss Janet Smith a student at the Art Institute was a thing of great terror made of wood and wire, crinoline and painted muslin, with reeking red mouth, slimy green body and flaming fiery eyes." (The Evanston Community Theatre). This show seemed well liked. Another community production was put on by Hedgerow Theatre Company in Pennsylvania in 1924. Ann Harding played Princess Nuala (O'Brien).

1929 brought *The Dragon* to Broadway. There were five performances in March at the Cherry Lane Theatre, produced by the Jitney Players. David Elliott directed; he directed five shows on Broadway in his career. Most of the actors performed in one to ten shows on

Broadway. Harrison Dowd played The King, Frances Simpson played Princess Nuala, and Alice B. Keating played the Queen (IBDB).

In 1976 Sean Walsh adapted Lady Gregory's play for the Peacock Theatre, retitled *Manus and the Mighty Dragon*. The show ran for 39 performances opening on December 30, 1976. Walsh has two other shows credited to his name, *Mothers* and *The Whipping* (Irish Theatre Institute). This play was never produced again. The cast list indicates that he added a storyteller character, otherwise the roles remained the same. Was this another instance of erasing women from history?

The only recent production of *The Dragon* was at Naugatuck High School in Connecticut in April of 2018 (Fig. 2). The show was reported on in their school newspaper *The Greyhound*. Justes Cureton, staff writer for *The Greyhound*, reported that the drama club chose it because they liked the comedic elements of the script and that they wanted to move away from realism (Cureton).



Figure 2: NHS Theater brings *The Dragon* to life by Justes Cureton

The Dragon has laid in wait since his short awakening in 2018. Slumbering, waiting for someone to wake him up and breathe life into the story again. One hundred and one years after he was written into life, he was summoned to the University of Portland to enchant again.

Art Nouveau

When I first began imagining the show, I had no notion of what the visual aesthetic should be based on. I knew that I wanted something beautiful and vivid and magical, but nothing specific was calling to me. I recall sitting at my kitchen table, reflecting on what I thought were beautiful and magical colors and textures. At one point I found myself staring at a painting on our dining room wall, a picture which my sister painted for me of a squirrel in the style of an Art Nouveau poster. I realized that the color, the lines, the feeling, everything suited my quest. I eagerly researched, in hopes that this style would be a justified fit for the show.

Art Nouveau, or “new art” was a design movement between 1890 and 1910. It was most relevant to architecture, posters, jewelry, and illustrations. This movement began as an attempt to form a new style after such realistic designs in the 19th century. This new art began in England (Britannica).

This is a floral, elegant style with a fairy tale quality. The Encyclopedia Britannica defines the key elements of Art Nouveau as:

The distinguishing ornamental characteristic of Art Nouveau is its undulating, asymmetrical line, often taking the form of flower stalks and buds, vine tendrils, insect wings, and other delicate and sinuous natural objects; the line may be elegant and graceful or infused with a powerfully rhythmic and whiplike force.

The four key Nouveau artists of interest for this production are Georges de Feure (Fig. 3), Alphonse Mucha (Fig. 4), Paul Berthon (Fig. 5), and Rennie Mackintosh (Fig. 6).



Figure 3: Women Surrounded by Flowers by Georges de Feure



Figure 4: Poster for F. Champenois, 1897 by Alphonse Mucha

The aesthetics of Art Nouveau also match the ideals of the ancient Irish culture. “The Irish were excessively fond of personal ornaments, which among the higher class were made of expensive materials, such as gold, silver, gems, white bronze, etc.” (Joyce 128). The love of beauty was a common theme for both eras, as was their love of nature, especially flowers. “They loved and had an intense appreciation of all things of beauty, whether natural or artificial; and they were remarkable for their close observation of the natural features of the world around them” (Joyce 162). For Art Nouveau artists, they were trying to break free of naturalism,

Hence, the new aesthetic approach to nature no longer reverted to mimesis, but rather developed a form of metaphysical reappropriation, symbolically embodied in a stylized line that was always fluid, animated, sinuous, enveloping, almost a sort of natural prolonging of organic rules and regulations (Fochessati 51-52).



Figure 5: L'ermitage by Paul Berthon, 1897



Figure 6: Washstand, by Charles Rennie Mackintosh, 1904

Though the Art Nouveau movement ended before *The Dragon* was born, I like to imagine that Lady Gregory would approve. Here is an art form filled with beauty and wonder, the same ideals that reign in her play. As she did not give us the year that *The Dragon* is meant to be set, I think choosing an art movement near the premier of the show is a nice touch.

Ancient Irish Kingship

In order to further appreciate details of the script, as well as the ancient Irish culture, I conducted research to aid my understanding of the play. For each element mentioned in the script that I was unfamiliar with, I compiled a list of questions which I then researched to answer. I also assembled a collection of books on topics I found pertinent, and these books were able to help me expand my knowledge about Irish culture, geography, and mythology. One key topic of interest was concerning ancient kings of Ireland, their court hierarchy, customs, and beliefs.

As P.W. Joyce explains, there were many kings in Ireland, and they honored a hierarchy:

There were in Ireland, from times beyond the reach of history, kings, who were of various grades according to the extent of the country or district they ruled over. The highest of all was the king of Ireland, who ruled in the royal palace at Tara. He was called the Ard-ri, ie 'High King' or over-king, because he claimed authority over all the others. There was also a king over each of the five provinces—Leinster, Munster, Connaught, Ulster, and Meath—who were subject to the Ard-ri (Joyce 1).

The ratio of kings to subjects was very high. "In fact, there were probably no less than 150 kings in the country at any given date between the fifth and twelfth centuries. Since the total population was probably well under half a million, this multiplicity of royalty is all the more remarkable" (Byrne 7). Kingship in Ireland did follow blood lines, but instead of birth order

being the only key deciding factor, chiefs would meet together to elect the royal family member they deemed the most virtuous. They would consider wisdom and bravery in addition to other admirable qualities to help them make their choice (Joyce 2).

Though kingship gave these families rights to castles, people to attend on them, and various luxuries, they were not above the law. The Brehon Laws, or judges' laws, held the royals accountable. If a king felt that he was wronged, instead of acting out in anger, he would need to consult the judges of the law, just like every other citizen (Joyce 21). The judges were not the only ones considered equal to the king. The queen was considered equal to her king and his judge (Bhreathnach 83).

Qualities that were viewed as admirable in a king were recorded in the Audacht Morainn, a medieval Irish wisdom book. Kings were to be, "merciful, just, impartial, conscientious, firm, generous, hospitable, honourable, beneficent, capable, honest, stable, steady and true judging" (Bhreathnach 94). Furthermore, "The higher the rank of the person the more was expected from him, and a king should be hospitable without limit." (Joyce 119).

Though Irish culture held their kings and royals more accountable than other medieval cultures, they shared many of the same practices of chivalry throughout Europe.

Chivalry taught the world the duty of noble service willingly rendered. It upheld courage and enterprise in obedience to rule, it consecrated military prowess to the service of the Church, glorified the virtues of liberality, good faith, unselfishness and courtesy, and above all, courtesy to women. Against these may be set the vices of pride, ostentation, love of bloodshed, contempt of inferiors, and loose manners. Chivalry was an imperfect discipline, but it was a discipline, and one fit for the times (Cornish 27-28).

A difference of European chivalry and Irish values was the devotion to the church. While St. Patrick brought Catholic faith to Ireland in the fifth century (O'Riافةartaigh), faith in druids and

fairies continued, causing Christian faith to merge on some points with druidic values and practices. Before Christianity arrived, the Irish worshipped and revered whichever objects or gods were meaningful to them, including elements like water, the sun, wind, fire, and the stars (Joyce 29-30). Druids were held in high esteem, and they often had positions in royal homes to help predict the future (Joyce 24-26).

Through these facts about kings, queens, druids, and Brehon lawyers, we are able to better understand the relationships between the characters in *The Dragon*. We understand that the king was not the sole voice of power, and that he shared his power with his queen, druid (such as Fintan), and lawyer (such as Dall Glic). Accordingly, it is made clearer why Lady Gregory's king discusses the problems in the play with these fellow court members, and why his word alone is not always respected. We understand why Princess Nuala is so bold in voicing her opinions. The hierarchy between kings reveals that of the kings and princes in *The Dragon*, King Manus of Sorchá is the highest authority, followed by the King, and then the Prince of the Marshes. In becoming aware of what qualities were considered virtues in ancient Ireland, we are able to see which moments people are acting nobly, and which moments characters are leaning into vice.

Fairy Tale Structure and Expectations

Fairy and folk tales exist as far back as we have record, and further, when you consider tales and oral history shared around the fire. All cultures have them, and many themes are shared across countries and continents. What does an audience expect when served a fairy tale? Do those rules change when it is a play rather than a written or spoken story?

To say that this field of study is vast is an understatement. Even with limiting the search to fairy tale structure or tropes yield diverse results, delving into the gender roles in fairy tales, different cultural structures, and explorations into every vein and thread of storytelling. It would be an impossible feat to research all aspects of folk or fairy tales. I will restrict my focus to audience expectations, a brief foray into Irish fairy tales as a genre of their own, and a few helpful fairy tale details that particularly assist in my understanding of *The Dragon* as a fairy tale.

Let's begin at the beginning with the notion of "Once Upon a Time." An American audience instantly recognizes this phrase as the start of a story. Disney movies have reinforced this beginning to fairy tale film watchers. Google searching the phrase brings links to details about ABC's series by the same name. Scroll further down and Google will provide you with ways to watch said show, or links to additional fantasy shows such as *Grimm* or *Game of Thrones*. In searching for library books containing this phrase, there are countless titles, some of them biographies or memoirs, others that are collected fairy tales from a great assortment of cultures, others still are books with children as their intended audience, there are some regarding the structure of fairy tales, and others still about the impact of story time in schools.

Anthony Madrid, a poet, essayist, and director of the MFA Creative Writing program at the University of Houston-Victoria wrote an exploration of the phrase "once upon a time" for the Paris Review. He found that the important word is truly "once." His research revealed that "once" or "one time" is used in nearly all the beginning sentences of fairy tales across all languages. Madrid speculates that setting tales of this nature in the distant past allow the storyteller to proceed without the interruption of immediate questions, such as "where are

they now?” (Madrid). The idea that one phrase is able to instantly transport the audience into a similar mindset about what to expect is key. Something about “once upon a time” gives an audience an understanding that a fairy tale is about to be shared. “...the more predictable the opening flourish, the better, it seems to me” (Madrid).

Other fairy tale experts note that “Once upon a time” is important due to the framework it provides.

Nearly all fairy tales are framed in some way. When we think of fairy tales, we think of them as bracketed between a “once upon a time” and a “happily ever after.” These framing gestures—and their equivalents in many European and non-European languages—tell us that we are entering and leaving a narrative world where the supernatural is commonplace, where the rules of our ordinary world do not apply, where wishes can come true. This world is rarely fixed in time or in space, but the framing formulas make it clear that whatever happens, happens at a great remove from us. We peer into this world from a distance, often conscious of the difference between its enclosed space and the unfixed boundaries of our daily experience (Harries 104).

By framing the story, we understand that we are entering into the world of that story. It is difficult to think of a fairy tale that does not have an opening invocation, even if it is not exactly “once upon a time.” Even Star Wars has one. There is something about using a phrase to invite the audience into the tale.

Irish folk and fairy tales tend toward magic and miracles. In the introduction to W.B. Yeats’ *Fairy & Folk Tales of Ireland*, Dr. Corebett states, “These folk tales are full of simplicity and musical occurrences, for they are the literature of a class for whom every incident in the old rut of birth, love, pain, and death has cropped up unchanged for centuries: who have steeped everything in the heart: to whom everything is a symbol.” Yeats shared fairy tales from his interviews with Irish locals, a practice which Lady Gregory was also noted for. He observed,

Heaven and Fairyland—to these has Biddy Hart given all she dreams of magnificence, and to them her soul goes out—to the one in love and hope, to the other in love and fear—day after day and season after season; saints and angels, fairies and witches, haunted thorn trees and holy wells, are to her what books, and plays, and pictures are to you and me. Indeed they are far more; for too many among us grow prosaic and commonplace, but she keeps ever a heart full of music (Yeats 302).

“Wonder tale” is a specific designation given to a number of Irish folktales, though some argue that their origin comes from Germany. “The world of the wonder tale is a fantastical one, full of strange beings and happenings, and is generally prefaced with the remark ‘Long ago’—i.e. the events are said to have taken place in a context totally different from the ordinary experience world—in reality, a quite incredible world” (Ó hÓgáin 501). Ó hÓgáin suggests that the popularity of wonder tales in Ireland is because they are “long, very stylized and open to ornamentation, and are quite bombastic in their content and form” (Ó hÓgáin 501). Lady Gregory has another wonder play in addition to *The Dragon*, titled *The Golden Apple*, which features the Hag of Slaughter as a main character. That play is also of interest to me, and after encountering *The Dragon*, I am eager to dig into *The Golden Apple* in the future.

While much could be said about the resurgence of Irish Nationalism at the time Lady Gregory wrote this play, or how Lady Gregory herself was a fervent believer in the Nationalist movement, the only relevant note is that as a result, value was put on traditional Irish tales. As Séamus Ó Duilearga notes:

The most extensive collecting efforts have taken place in countries such as Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Hungary, Ireland, and Latvia. The reason for this might be that smaller countries have often feared for the loss of their identity, and inasmuch as identity is very much tied to folklore, nationalistic and patriotic scholars felt the necessity of preserving as much of their heritage—their precious folklore—as possible. Nowhere is this factor more evident than in Ireland. For

centuries the Irish have been concerned about the ever-increasing influence of England and English culture (Ó Duilearga 153).

There is a hope that fairy tales teach us about ourselves—who we are, how to better ourselves, and about the adventure of life. In his book *Breaking the Magic Spell: Radical Theories of Folk & Fairy Tales*, Jack Zipes posits:

They [folk and fairy tales] know and tell us that we want to become kings and queens, ontologically speaking to become masters of our own realms, in touch with the projects of our lives and self-projections, to stand upright as makers of history. Folk and fairy tales illuminate the way. They anticipate the millennium. They ferret out deep-rooted wishes, needs, and wants and demonstrate how they all can be realized. In this regard folk and fairy tales present a challenge, for within the tales lies the hope of self-transformation and a better world (Zipes xi).

Opposing forces have a role to play in fairy tales. We crave the triumph of good over evil, to see beautiful behavior chase away ugly actions, to find that truth wins over lies. “Such clashes cannot be resolved without struggling to find and hold one’s identity” (Stone 34).

In terms of this specific story trope, the Aarne-Thompson-Uther Index, called the ATU Index, is an excellent resource. This index classifies folk and fairy tales in a similar way to how the Dewey Decimal System sorts books by content. These topics range from number 1, The Theft of Fish, to number 2335, Tales Filled with Contradictions. Tales of Magic cover numbers 300-749 and contain ten subcategories, of which Supernatural Adversaries brings us to number 300, The Dragon-Slayer (Uther). *The Lore of Ireland: An Encyclopedia of Myth, Legend and Romance* by Daithí Ó hÓgáin was a helpful resource in not only discovering details about Irish lore, but also in further clarifying the Dragon-Slayer tale from an Irish perspective. It was likely a tale similar to *The Lore of Ireland* version that Lady Gregory would have encountered before writing her take on this story. See Appendix Three for the ATU and *Lore of Ireland* versions.

There are many definitions and explanations as to what elements must be included in a fairy tale for it to truly be a fairy tale, and not a myth or a legend. While scholars tend to disagree about these definitions, I have found several factors to be helpful as I grappled with what it meant to tell a fairy tale in the form of a play to an audience.

Fairy tales can be coming of age stories. When I think of Lady Gregory's subtitles for *The Dragon*, 'the Awakening of a Soul' certainly leans toward this definition. "Fairy tale, also known as wonder tale or by the German term, *Marchen*. A tale about a young person's transition from childhood to adulthood, usually represented by marriage. Magical beings, animals and objects figure prominently in fairy tales" (Sierra 3-4). Princess Nuala and the Prince of the Marshes, and yes, even King Manus seem to come to age in *The Dragon*. While there is not a proposal or a marriage by the end of the play, I would say that it is apparent that Nuala and Manus are soul mates, and that the Prince is just beginning his own tale of discovery, as he leaves to travel the world for a year and a day to grow up.

Marina Warner lists five defining characteristics of fairy tales in her book *Once Upon a Time: A Short History of Fairy Tale*. From her perspective, these tales must be short, familiar, come from oral tradition, use imagery language and motifs, and:

Another alternative term for 'fairy tale' is 'wonder tale' from the German *Wundermarchen*, and it catches a quality of the genre more eloquently than 'fairy tale' or 'folk tale'. Although it does not enjoy the currency of 'fairy tale', 'wonder tale' recognizes the ubiquitousness of magic in the stories. The suspension of natural physical laws produces a magical state of reality throughout this form of narrative, which leads to wonder, astonishment, 'ajaib, as invoked by Arabic literary ideas of fairy tale. Supernatural agency and the pleasure of wonder are interwoven in the character of fairy tales—this interrelationship presents a fifth defining characteristic (Warner xxii).

In short, a fairy tale must have wonder. This matches perfectly with my vision for the show. It seems as if to call this a fairy tale, that we must begin by an invocation to invite the audience into the tale, and from there we must honor the magic that exists in that world. By choosing to add the words “once upon a time,” I hoped that my audience would embrace the coming magic, and that by collaborating with my designers and actors, that the magic would shine through the story Lady Gregory crafted for us. Fairy tales are simple yet intricate.

Comedy Structure and Expectations

Now that we have unpacked expectations and structure of fairy tales, we can look toward how layering comedy on top changes the medium. Comedy is another simple yet slippery concept to define. I consulted several academic tomes about comedy, and sadly many of them were dry, outdated, and narrow minded. My comedy training comes from *Commedia dell'Arte* and Clowning, and there are good texts available on those topics, yet neither quite applied to the comedy of Lady Gregory. In reading a few of her other comedy non-fairy tale plays, it is clear that she finds delight in allowing her audience to laugh at the absurdities of our natural human behavior. *Spreading the News* is arguably her most famous play, about how far one rumor can spread in one small community in one day.

Thankfully I stumbled across *What Are You Laughing At* by Dan O'Shannon, who is known for his contributions in writing and producing *Cheers*, *Frasier*, and *Modern Family*. He was the first person I encountered to define comedy as many things. “I urge you to not confuse your preferred use of comedy with the definition of comedy itself. Comedy is flexible. It can be

a sword, it can be a Band-Aid. It can make us think, it can distract us from thinking. Also: We all have individual senses of humor” (O’Shannon xiii).

He goes on in his book to explain that perhaps comedy is best looked at through the lens of what he calls “the comedic event.” For comedy to exist, it must be received by an audience, whether that is an audience of the self (if you read a joke when you are alone), of a few people, or of a million people (such as a YouTube video or a TV show). What matters is that something must occur, whether verbal or physical or both, and someone responds to it by laughing or by silent amusement (O’Shannon).

As I began to ponder what it meant to look at comedy as a moment where something happens and there is a response, it clicked that truly that is what theater is. One actor does something, be it funny or not, and the other actor responds, and the audience responds to their whole interaction. While this is not a deep discovery, it was helpful to clarify that comedy does not have specific laws, but rather it depends on the audience. As a director, it is all I can do to respond and encourage what I feel is funny, and to help the actors find things that they respond to as funny. I let my sense of humor guide my understanding of what makes this play a comedy.

Comedy fairy tales are generally musicals. In one of my conversations with Ariel, my puppet designer who you shall hear more of in the chapter on designers, she asked me what other comedy fairy tales I knew of. As I wracked my brain, all I could think of beyond Lady Gregory’s two wonder plays were musicals. *Into the Woods*, *Once Upon a Mattress*, and *Cinderella* were only the instant examples; I am sure there are more, especially when you dive into children’s theater. However, I was hard pressed to think of another fairy tale comedy, at least one that was not a “skit” from an education packet for elementary school teachers.

Perhaps they exist, but they are less common, maybe even devised shows that are not in print? I will be curious to keep seeking this genre out, as it has become dear to me.

Another piece to the puzzle was in discovering that Lady Gregory translated Molière plays. There is a common thread between Molière's Commedia-inspired humor and Lady Gregory's Irish fairy tale humor. This heartens me, to think that people are people, and that it doesn't matter where you come from or what you've experienced, some things are funny to us all. There are tropes within Molière that I believe Lady Gregory draws on, and then flavors in her own distinct way. For example, the King has traits of Molière's misers as well as traits of the hungry servant. Imperial women exist in both realms. Amusing servant-master relationship dynamics exist in both. Being familiar with Molière's body of work, having assistant directed a production of his *Tartuffe*, and having researched Commedia dell'Arte's influence on his work, I felt well equipped to apply what I knew of Molière's style into how I approached *The Dragon*. I would encourage future directors of this play who have not encountered Molière's body of work to be sure to research more deeply into his style.

When I consider what an audience expects when something is labeled "comedy," I think of laughter. Laughter is a tangible way to hear if the audience finds something funny or not. That is not to say that an audience could not respond to something as funny without laughing, but this trained clown knows that laughter is your evaluator. As O'Shannon writes, there are many types of comedy, from slapstick to irony, and not all of them yield belly laughs.

My own sense of humor especially enjoys verbal wit, slapstick, marrying verbal and physical funny moments, and reoccurring jokes. I tried to enhance Lady Gregory's verbal jokes with non-verbal percussive sounds and physical movement to match the words and intentions

of the characters. As I worked with my actors, I was able to help them understand where the jokes were, how to embody that moment with physical and vocal choices, and how to enhance the humor when possible. I also was able to encourage actors to find non-verbal jokes, some reoccurring, that sprang from characters following their motivations without having a text link. Examples of this were in the King hiding snacks in several places and going to eat them when the Queen was not focusing her attention on him, and Dall Glic eating part of the King's breakfast when he was speaking with the Queen. While most of our physical humor was grounded in the text, it gave the world more richness in having additional opportunities for humor, especially in places where there were fewer verbal jokes.

In looking at this play as first and foremost a fairy tale, and secondly a comedy, I was able to see which moments needed to land firmly in one of the two, and which could share space. Lady Gregory was fairly transparent in laying it out for me, once I knew that those were the two forms I was looking for. All of the magic scenes needed to be firmly planted in the fairy tale world. If I had allowed these to get silly, suddenly we would have had a campy mess. Similarly, if we had treated the scenes riddled with jokes and comedic situations as fairy tale wonder moments, the play would be drawn out and nothing would shine as enchanting. With the right balance of each, my hope was to keep the audience engaged, and by allowing them to laugh a lot in the beginning, that maybe they would be moved by the fairy tale magic.

Script Editing

The grad student noticed some problematic words and phrases in the script. She wondered how best to deal with Irish sentence structure. Then she realized that the script was no longer under copyright, and that she had the freedom to make changes. Thankfully her team included a gifted student dramaturg/playwright. The grad student knew that the editing process would be an entire adventure in and of itself.

The Reasoning

As I approached this script, knowing that my actors would be University of Portland undergraduate students, and that we would have a mixed audience including a field trip of upper elementary school children (though sadly this was cancelled due to Coronavirus), university students, and community members, two main challenges became apparent. One was the use of words that have changed definitions or words where the modern audience would take offense to. The second was the sentence structure of Irish phrases. Together with my student dramaturg, Maddie Nguyen, we debated and came to conclusions about what to edit.

Two words in the script gave me the most pause. “Queer” is a word that in 2020 has a very different meaning than it did in 1919. While most people probably could recognize that it used to mean strange or unusual, I don’t think we can hear that word anymore without thinking of it as one of the letters in LGBTQ+. I don’t believe that Lady Gregory was using that word as any comment about gender or orientation, so Maddie and I had no qualms with changing that word to “strange” or “peculiar” in the script. One example of a line that we edited for this purpose is in Act 2 Scene 7 where the fairies enter, and the King says “It would seem as if the

world was grown to be very peculiar.” Peculiar captures the King’s sentiment about how the fairies are clearly magical, non-human entities.

The second word in question was also in regard to the fairies, being called “foreign” in the script. While we understand that foreign at its base does mean from another country, and though the fairies are from another country than the main characters, it felt as though there was a better word to express feelings about the fairies. In reflecting with Maddie about what Dall Glic was actually trying to say in Act 2 Scene 7 we agreed that she is drawing attention to what makes them different from the royal court, and that is their magic. Once we had pinpointed that, we had no hesitations to change the line to “Even with one eye, I would say that those are very marvelous-looking folk.” We also adapted the gendered “men” to “folk” as at the time of the edits I had not cast the roles of the fairies and wanted to be more inclusive. As a second confirmation, the “fae or fairy folk” is a phrase we are used to, rather than “fairy men” or “fairy women.”

This is clearly a play written by an Irish playwright to be performed by Irish actors. The University of Portland pool of undergrad actors almost exclusively have American accents, with some variation as to regional dialect, with the majority having Pacific Northwest and West Coast tendencies. Theater students are encouraged to take one speaking voice class. Knowing this, I paused to ask myself if I wanted to present the play with Irish dialects, or if the show could withstand an American dialect. While I believe the show would be more lovely and more honoring of Lady Gregory with the Irish dialect, I could not bear to spend the amount of rehearsal time that it would be necessary to get 12 actors speaking in the same, well-trained dialect. I would have needed to employ a dialect coach, and my producer explained that if I

wanted a sound designer, a costume designer, and a puppet designer, I was already at my maximum of guest designers for this production. I could not dream of sacrificing costumes, sound, or puppets, so I came to terms with an American dialect.

I stand by my decision, and I think that the play, after editing, is still true to Lady Gregory's intentions. I believe that for our American audience, it is probably easier to jump into a story where the characters are speaking as we are used to hearing. The actors still had plenty of vocal work, to address tone and pitch and vocal variation within the style of a fairy tale. It was helpful not to also teach them a dialect. If I was given the opportunity to direct this show again, and there were resources available for a dialect coach, I would enjoy embracing the Irish sentence structures and to have a production that would sound more like Lady Gregory's premier of the show. I would advise future directors of this show to consider what amount of rehearsal time they have to devote to dialect, and to balance that with the amount of time needed to spend on staging, character work, table work, and other needs of the show. Each production will find their own conclusion based on their time constraints, resources, and goals. That being said, I would say that this play can withstand thoughtful editing and still yield an excellent result. Few lines needed to be cut, merely reordered or rephrased to become understandable in a different dialect.

The Process

Knowing that I wanted to edit the script in the most mindful way possible, I worked with Maddie Nguyen, student dramaturg, to find the best process to edit together. We began our process by having a group of actors meet in my home to read the play as is. We both took notes

as to which parts contained problematic phrases or were difficult to follow. For me, when I heard the script aloud, read by actors, I was able to see that the phrasing really is challenging. When I read the script aloud to myself, I was already growing accustomed to some of the more strange phrases, but I had to remind myself that our audience would likely only be seeing the play once, and if they didn't understand the plot, the jokes, or the tender moments, then we might as well not do the play. In hearing it, I was eager to move forward with the editing process.

The next step that Maddie and I took was to create a Google Document with two columns, allowing us to have the 1919 script on the left, and the script we would edit on the right side. This would ensure ease in seeing what we had changed, and to make it easy to revert back if we decided that we pushed an edit too far. The Google Documents software also allowed us to leave comments for each other, as we were going through the scripts individually, then meeting together to go over all the changes. I had heard advice from other directors that they often typed the whole script that they were about to work on, to spend a significant amount of time with each line, and to become intimately acquainted with the script. In order to put the script on Google Documents, I decided to type it all out, going slowly, and checking to ensure that I captured every line exactly. This did take a great deal of time, but I do agree with the advice I was given, by the end I felt that I did have an excellent awareness of the script.

Maddie and I each worked through the entire script, first marking phrases and words that we thought needed editing. We marked these in red. Then we continued by proposing edits, marking our changed lines in different colors, so we could follow each other's work. When we were near the end of that process, we met in person to talk through all the changes,

debating words or phrases that one proposed but the other disagreed with. We were able to agree on what we believed would be the best choices to further the audience's understanding and enjoyment of the play. Two words that came up as questions were "crippled" within the phrase "you'll be crippled and crappled with gout" which the Queen tells the King in Act 1 Scene 2, and "as lief" when Manus says "What I do I'd as lief do in your own royal parlour" at the end of Act 2 Scene 6. We decided to keep these the way they were until later in the process. Our concern was that calling anything/anyone "crippled" could be offensive, though it might be okay in the context of gout, and that "as lief" seemed archaic, though that could serve Manus' nature as a high king. After some time, we agreed that both phrases could stay in the script, as "crippled" was used not as an insult and it was an extra bonus that "crippled and crappled" is a vivid pairing, and since "as lief" makes Manus sound kingly, even through his cook disguise.

From there, we had a second read through with actors at my home. At this time we also timed each act, to see approximately how long the play might be. We gave each actor notecards to write down lines or words that they found troubling due to content, or that were hard to make sense of. Maddie and I also took notes, adding anything that had slipped under our notice in the previous editing round. It was at this time that the word "dyke" stood out as another word with a different modern meaning that we might not want to evoke in this production. This was also when we realized that the nickname Princess Nuala uses for her nurse, "Muime," would be too challenging to our audience. The actors kindly shared their feedback, and those who were at the previous read through expressed that the script had come a long way since then, but still had one more layer of improvement.

Maddie and I didn't want to take all the Irish-isms out of the script, because that didn't seem true to the heart of the story. While we did change the syntax of many sentences, we left what we felt to be a fairy tale feeling to the phrases. While this meant that some of the lines were not easy to say the first time the actors spoke them, we hoped that in rehearsal that the actors would master the unique speech patterns and to use the lines effectively in pursuit of objectives. We felt that a fairy tale should not sound common, but in dealing with a realm of kings and queens that we could elevate their status through some uncommon phrases.

French Scenes

After the second read through, Maddie and I met again to make additional changes based on the feedback. By making the additional changes recommended by actors and noticed by ourselves, we felt that the script was about as far as we could take it. It was at this time that we realized that structure would be our next challenge. Lady Gregory wrote the play in three acts with no scenes separating moments within the acts. While this play does adhere to the unity of time, meaning that there are no moments of transition that could not happen in full light, I knew that it would be difficult to know how to rehearse each act without having smaller bite-sized scenes. As Maddie and I considered how Lady Gregory had translated several Moliere plays, and how this play is not unlike Moliere in structure, we agreed that French Scenes would be an excellent rule to govern our scenes.

We each looked at how we would break up the acts into scenes, based on entrances and exits, as French Scenes dictate. There were a few small questions about how long of a scene would be reasonable, such as if someone exits, but then two lines later someone else comes in,

is it better to have the scene change with the entrance, or the exit, or is it worth having a scene that is only two lines in length? When we met again in August, we found that we mostly had the same divisions of scenes, with a few differences, on moments where there were only a few lines after an exit or before the next entrance. We discussed what would make the most sense for rehearsal, whether I would want to work very small moments of transition, and what the full duration of the moment in question looked like.

Through our discussion we were able to make sound choices, and the divisions that we made in that meeting were the French Scenes that made it into our final version of the script. Once we made these divisions, ten scenes in Act 1, nine scenes in Act 2, and 16 scenes in Act 3, I was able to finally see which characters had the most time commitment, and where it made sense to take an intermission.

I was surprised to discover that Dall Glic is the character on stage the most, even though the King and Queen speak the most. Manus only appears in the second and third acts, while Taig is introduced in the final scene in Act 2. Several characters appear in Act 1 and Act 3 though not in Act 2, such as the Prince of the Marshes and Fintan. I feel that there are many realizations that I was able to make prior to having actors because the French Scenes divided the action up so neatly. French Scenes also made it easier to know how much of a commitment each actor would be making. At the University of Portland, one question that actors answer on their audition form is “would you be willing to accept a substantial role” the term substantial describing a role where they would be on stage in most of the scenes.

I did find a few typos and small errors after my last session with Maddie and before I sent my script to be printed. I also elected to make a few adjustments after speaking with my

costume and set designers as to what the correct phrasing would be to match their designs to the lines. One example of this was the use of the word “cloak.” Prof. Sue Bonde and I had spoken about the era of the fashion as being Edwardian, which put the men in “coats” rather than “cloaks.” Another example was that in Act 2 Scene 3 there were lines where Dall Glic calls to King Manus out the window. In speaking with set designer Prof. Larry Larsen and puppet designer Ariel Lauryn, we decided that for the dragon puppet head moment in Act 3 Scene 15 that the window of the room of the set would have to be several stories up in the air, which meant that we wouldn’t be able to see King Manus outside based on the perspective. This led me to change the lines, so that they see him in the hallway off-stage out the main entrance door, to preserve the concept of the discovery of Manus, without breaking the illusion of a high up window.

In Rehearsal

Due to the rehearsal schedule, in having only one day between cast announcement and the first read, I knew that we needed to have the scripts printed before casting choices were made. This complicated the gender pronouns of several characters. I knew that I was open to using the pronouns of the actors cast for the roles of Dall Glic, the Gatekeeper (who would also play a fairy), and Fintan the Astrologer. As the script was written using he/him pronouns for all three of these characters, I decided to leave them as is, noting on the audition character descriptions that I was open for any representation of those three characters. I cast three she/her identifying actors in these roles, and I had the actors mark in their script the shift from he to

she, and from lines like “wiseman” to “wisewoman.” The actors were very adept at this and made few mistakes in calling these characters by their preferred pronouns.

Another discovery that we made in rehearsal in regard to the script was the Shadow Puppet Battle Sequence, Act 3 Scene 11. When first editing the script, Maddie and I had few qualms with this. Once we added sound designer Prof. Hal Logan and puppet designer Ariel Lauryn to the conversation, we realized that several lines needed adjustment to aid the timing of the spectacle. Because we had the visual and musical support of these designers, we were able to cut phrases such as, “I see him!” or “I hear him!” choosing to let the audience see and hear naturally.

There was an additional challenge with the first line of the battle scene. I knew that I needed the Gatekeeper to enter and deliver the first portion of the line ‘The Dragon! The Dragon!’ but Ariel wanted the first image to be “its mouth open and a fiery flame from it!” which called for darkness on stage, and the Gatekeeper still had two sentences after she spoke the imagery line. In working with Ariel, we decided to have the Gatekeeper skip the imagery line. We had her run in to say her line, exit, and then we had the lights go out while Dall Glic spoke the imagery line, so that the puppeteers could support that image with shadows. I was thankful that Ariel and I were able to clearly discuss what needed to happen and why, and that the actors were flexible in adjusting their lines, even after they had memorized them.

There were a few additional changes to this scene, as we honed the best timing of hearing sounds, seeing shadows, and speaking lines. We had a wonderful rehearsal where Ariel was working with the student puppeteers on their choreography for the shadow battle, while Prof. Hal and I added sound on top, timing it out with the actors speaking their lines. This was

truly collaboration in action. Each designer along with me was able to clearly express what they needed, and the others would adjust along with them. Ego stayed out of the room, all the choices were made by what was best for the storytelling, and it was an honor to be a part of that beautiful collaboration.

There were a few small changes made to other lines in the process. If a line stopped making sense, I would pause, ask the actor about it, consider what was to be gained or lost, and made the adjustment on the spot. I feel that because we had the freedom to make adjustments, that it was well worth considering any change that would make things more accessible for the audience, especially keeping in mind any young audience members.

One discovery we found in week four of rehearsals caused me to change the “Gatekeeper” into the “Housekeeper.” She is named as Gatekeeper twice in lines of the script, one where Taig mentions that the Gatekeeper was keeping people out, and the other when the Queen describes how she kept non-royals from the house by alerting the Gatekeeper. In casting a woman to play the role, as a double with Sibby, and also as a fairy, I spoke with the actor at length about how to distinguish the roles. We talked about movement and voice as the best ways to show differences. As we continued to work on these three roles, she was having the hardest time finding the Gatekeeper. This was not surprising, as the Gatekeeper only enters, announces, and exits; she has very little interaction or apparent relationship with other characters.

In costume designer Prof. Sue Bonde’s approach, she put the Gatekeeper in the dress of a servant, clearly lower than the Nurse, but still part of the serving world. As I looked at her costume, it dawned on me that everything that she does or says fits the description of a

Housekeeper, especially when you consider our audience's likely experience in watching Downton Abbey. I asked the actor how she would feel about changing her character's name and title to Housekeeper, and she was very positive about it. Prof. Sue was able to add in a few final touches to assist in this small change of distinction, and it was simple to change the two lines using her name. I would not suggest this change to other productions where the design is not set in a world where the Housekeeper is an icon. Other names changes would likely work, depending on the world of each additional production.

I wrestled with how the show should begin for several weeks. While I appreciate that Lady Gregory begins the script with a joke ("There's nobody here" spoken in a theater with an audience makes me laugh), it didn't feel like the way to begin a fairy tale. Based on my research into "Once upon a time" I really did feel the need to begin with either words or movement that could lead the audience into the fairy tale world. I worked with the actors to create a short movement piece, but the nagging question was always, "Is this movement piece lyrical or narrative?" I knew that it couldn't easily be both. I ended up crafting a piece that was narrative, but it started feeling long. I knew that a deadline for a decision was impending, and I gave myself one more night to sleep on it, before reporting to sound designer Prof. Hal, who was to compose the music for this introduction. I woke up knowing that what I had done was the equivalent of shouting to my audience, "IT'S A FAIRY TALE!" when what I really wanted was to whisper gently, "it's a fairy tale."

With that realization, I pulled way back and collaborated on a simple, elegant fairy tale beginning. "Once upon a time. There was a Princess. A Prophecy. And a Dragon." These were all the words needed to open the fairy tale world, so when Dall Glic entered to make her first joke,

the audience would already feel secure in the world of the play, and hopefully able to laugh and embrace the incoming comedy. I feel that these simple lines gave the lighting and sound designers ample opportunity to craft something lovely and theatrical, to tease the audience with the upcoming magic.

I was pleased by all the changes we discovered in the rehearsal process. I feel that the script was strong by the end of our process, and hopefully my audience found every line accessible. I hold that the Irish-isms we kept in the script were effective in keeping magic and romance at the forefront of this script, and that the changes to syntax that we made smoothed meaning out for our audience.

Script Analysis

In looking at the play from an analysis perspective, I took the approach of looking at the physical action of each scene along with the emotional and underlying importance of each scene. This helped me to track the motion of the story while I could consider how each scene added to the overall meaning and momentum of the story.

Act Zero Scene One (Princess, Fintan, and Dragon)

This is the bonus teaser movement, an opening for our audience to enter the realm of the fairy tale. We are introduced to the Princess, the Astrologer, and we see a flash of the shadow dragon. It was important to me that the shadows be briefly introduced at the beginning, so that the audience would be looking forward to more, and hopefully to prevent confusion when we switch styles so dramatically in Act 3 Scene 11.

This movement is all about establishing the magic and beauty of the show. The music introduces the main themes, as an overture would do for a musical. I like to think of this scene as the audience opening up the fairy tale book before them to begin the tale.

Act One Scene One (King and Dall Glic)

The Dall Glic leads the King into the main room of the castle, carrying a tray of food for the King, which the Queen has forbidden him to eat. The King eats, while discussing the Queen with the Dall Glic. Dall Glic suspects that the Queen is coming, and accordingly the King covers his food in hopes that she won't notice.

This scene establishes the friendship between Dall Glic and the King, and it reveals some basic plot information, such as that the King is recently remarried, and that he is dieting against his will.

Act One Scene Two (King, Dall Glic, and Queen)

The Queen enters, although the King had thought that she was up in Princess Nuala's room, teaching her. The Queen explains that the Princess released birds on her, which frightened her and pecked at the beading on her gown. Then the Queen discovers the King's tray and questions him about it. They discuss the King's breakfast, which the Queen thought was healthy, but the King disliked. The King wishes to continue to eat, though the Queen protests at each food he suggests. The Queen prepares a spoonful of medicine, tansy juice, for the King to drink. The King does not want the medicine. Dall Glic suggests that the Queen should leave it for him to take later. The Queen wonders if she could cure Dall Glic's blind eye. Dall Glic hopes that the Queen will leave her alone; the Queen ties a knot in her handkerchief to

remind herself to think about his eye later. The Queen holds out the spoon for the King to drink his medicine, but a ball flies in through the window and the medicine is spilled.

This scene establishes the relationship between the King and the Queen. This scene proves that they love each other, and still have some honeymoon joy left in them, while they also clearly don't know each other well yet. The power dynamic between the King and Queen is established, in that we see that the Queen holds great power over the King, but that she truly believes that she is helping him rather than bossing him or manipulating him.

Act One Scene Three (King, Dall Glic, Queen, Princess Nuala, and Nurse)

Princess Nuala enters with her Nurse. The Queen points out the mess she's responsible for, then asks Nuala if she has memorized her lessons. The Princess explains that she has not, as she throws down her books. She reasons that she is 17, it's her birthday, and that she is done with books. The Princess asks the King if it is true that the cook has gone away. This is news to the King. The Princess accuses the Queen of sending him away by annoying him. The Queen denies it, saying that she was just trying to help him. The King is upset. The Queen explains that she is already advertising for a new cook, and that she'll take care of it. The Princess is sad that the cook has gone, as he is one of her first memories. The Queen wants the Princess to move out into her own castle. The Princess explains that she is tired of castles, and that she is not ready to settle down anytime soon. The Queen blames the Nurse that the Princess isn't ready to marry yet; the Nurse defends herself, pointing out that she has raised royals, like King Manus of Sorcha, her whole career. The King recounts the Princesses' suitors, and Nuala counters as to why she turned each of them down. The Princess becomes fed up and points out that if they want to sell her off, then they are treating her like an animal. She runs out with her ball.

Here we meet the Princess for the first time, and we see how full of life she is. We see first-hand the relationship dynamic between the Princess and her new stepmother, the Queen, and how they both try to pull the King to their side. We see that the Princess and the King like to laugh and tease each other. For the first time we are able to see Dall Glic and the Nurse together, and to see that they are of a similar class and are friends.

Act One Scene Four (King, Dall Glic, Queen, Nurse)

The Queen decides that she needs to take Nuala into hand, by sending her to study in Scotland with other young ladies. Everyone pushes back against this idea. The Nurse and Dall Glic hint that there is a specific reason not to send the Princess away. The Queen asks the King what the reason is. The Nurse explains that Fintan the Astrologer has foretold something about the Princess. Dall Glic is shocked to hear that the Queen has never heard of Fintan. The King expresses a doubt in all prophesies. Dall Glic explains the prophesy to the Queen: The Princess will be eaten by a dragon on her 18th birthday. The Queen wants to question Fintan. Dall Glic says that she saw Fintan outside their kitchen, which is a rare sighting. The Nurse weeps about the prophesy. The Queen suggests that they make Princess Nuala get married before her 18th birthday, since dragons do not eat married women. The King demands that the Princess should not be told about the prophesy.

This is an important scene, as it is the first time we hear what the prophesy predicts. Here is one of the first fairy tale sound motifs, which also offers the lights to get more magical and dramatic. We also see the Queen's attempt at problem solving, and how the Nurse and King are in fear and dread that the Princess should find out about it.

Act One Scene Five (King, Dall Glic, Queen, Nurse, and Princess Nuala)

The Princess enters, and the Queen has her notice how sad the King looks, blaming her refusal to marry as the King's main concern. The Princess is sympathetic and asks if the Queen has put him up to this. Everyone urges the Princess to marry, each suggesting a different time within the next year that would be best. The Princess is not happy to hear this.

Here we see the responses from the previous scene play out with the unsuspecting Princess. While Nuala doesn't know why everyone is suddenly urging her to wed, on her birthday no less, we have the delight of being in on a secret, knowing something that she does not.

Act One Scene Six (King, Dall Glic, Queen, Nurse, Princess Nuala, Housekeeper)

The Housekeeper enters to announce that a young prince with his entourage has arrived. The Princess predicts that he is here to propose. Dall Glic asks which prince he is, and the Housekeeper says that it is the Prince of the Marshes. Then the Housekeeper exits to allow the Prince entrance. The Nurse explains that the Prince of the Marshes is not quite as noble as the King, and that King Manus of Sorcha is the most important bachelor King in Ireland. Dall Glic and the Queen implore the Princess not to turn the Prince of the Marshes down, and she agrees that she will accept him. The Queen tells her to go get ready, even though the Princess thinks that she is already ready. The Princess leaves to change clothes as the Housekeeper announces the Prince of the Marshes.

Here we see what amount of control the adults in this situation have over the Princess. Even though everything we know about her up to here suggests that she would never give in to

an unwanted marriage, here we see her acquiesce. This affords a great opportunity for the reversal coming two scenes from here.

Act One Scene Seven (King, Dall Glic, Queen, Nurse, Aunts 1 & 2, and the Prince of the Marshes)

The King welcomes the Prince of the Marshes and his two Aunts. The Queen offers the Aunts a chair, which the Aunts want to save for the Prince. The first Aunt shows off the Prince's eel skin boots, and the second Aunt shows off her bag of remedies, including one to prevent death. The King asks the Prince about his father, who was his close friend in adolescence. The King asks what hobbies the Prince has, but the Aunts explain that outdoor hobbies are all too dangerous. The Prince, with many interruptions from his Aunts, explains that he is here because his family wants him to wed the Princess. The King suggests that maybe she is too young, but the Aunts explain that that is what they want, so that they can train her in their ways.

Here we see another youthful character, the Prince of Marshes, who is manipulated by his adults, in this case his aunts. We are able to see a contrast in how Princess Nuala and the Prince of the Marshes have dealt with being told what to do. We have seen the Princess fight against others' expectations of her to pave her own path, and now we see that the Prince has been defeated by the authority exerted on him.

Act One Scene Eight (King, Dall Glic, Queen, Nurse, Aunts 1 & 2, Prince of the Marshes, and Princess Nuala)

The Princess, now tidied up for the Prince, eavesdrops at the door. The King asks for them not to be too harsh with the Princess, but it's clear that the Aunts don't like energetic

princesses. The Princess enters and nicely curtsies to the Aunts and the Prince. They curtsy and bow to her, and the Prince is uneasy. The Princess uses all the right answers and proper things to say to please the Aunts and bore the Prince. The King is surprised to hear her say these things, but the Queen is happy about it. The Aunts approve of Princess Nuala and offer her an engagement ring. The Princess explains that there is bad news, the Queen interrupts to say that it's because the Princess is wearing heels. The Aunts approve of her shoes. The Princess shares a wild story about being cursed to be a sea-filly. This excites the Prince. The Princess lets down her hair and runs with the wind. The Prince is eager to chase her, but the Aunts try to stop him. The Aunts grab hold of the Prince. He manages to shake them loose, and so he runs after the Princess. The Aunts run out after him.

This scene is a great way for us to see the contrast of the Princess pretending to be what she understands the Aunts' version of the perfect young lady against who the Princess really is, and in my mind this affirms that the Princess should not be forced to pretend to be something that she is not (a demure, obedient doll). The Prince of the Marshes' spirit awakens in this scene, as soon as the Princess makes up the story about being a Sea-Filly. He is able to see someone lively for perhaps the first time in his life, and he gives his heart to her in an instance. The difference between his previous behavior and his awakened behavior is vast. He is able to assert his desires against his Aunts, and he is not shaken by their disapproval.

Act One Scene Nine (King, Dall Glic, Queen, Nurse, Princess Nuala)

The Princess sneaks back into the room. The Queen heaps shame on the Princess, and the King wonders why she rejected him, after saying that she would take the engagement. The Princess explains that she didn't like the family. The Queen fears that the Princess's reputation

will be ruined by this insane behavior. The King reckons that the Prince liked her more at the end than in the beginning. The Queen warns the King that this might cause a war, which upsets the King, since he doesn't think his battle armor fits over his belly anymore. The Queen wants the Princess to go after the Prince. The Princess has a temper tantrum. The King, Queen, and Princess have a verbal argument. The Princess doesn't like how the Queen is manipulating the King. The King makes an oath that the Princess will be given in marriage to the next man to enter the castle. The Princess shrinks as if hit by his words. The Nurse comforts the Princess. The Queen hints that if the Princess doesn't wed by her next birthday that there will be a consequence. The Nurse alerts the room that Fintan is at the window.

In this scene we see a triangle of butting heads. The Queen and the Princess continue their game of trying to get the King on their own side. The King sees that his assertions are not effective. These three are entering into a volatile state with each other. The oath the King makes changes everything, as oaths are serious business in this world. This oath sets up many of the upcoming plot conflicts of interest.

Act One Scene Ten (King, Dall Glic, Queen, Nurse, Princess Nuala, Fintan)

Fintan enters and complains that the kitchen boys didn't deliver her lard for her telescope. The Nurse and the Queen ask if she has any bad news for them, on the Princess' birthday, but she says she doesn't. The Queen wants Fintan to tell the Princess the prophesy, but the King objects. The Princess asks to be treated as an adult, not as a child. Fintan tells her that the prophesy predicts that on her next birthday, that she'll be eaten by a scaly green dragon from the North!

This is the second time that we have heard the prophesy, this time spoken by the prophet herself. Fintan brings a reality to the prophesy with her mystical presence. At this point our Princess has finally heard the prophesy and understands what is in store for her, and in hearing the prophesy she also begins to understand why others have been treating her specially. While we will not take an intermission after this scene, there is a tone shift in the sound the lights to move our audience into the next chapter of the tale.

Act Two Scene One (Princess Nuala and Nurse)

The Nurse tries to cheer Princess Nuala up after the sad news. The Princess reflects on what a spoiled child she was. The Nurse notes the tears on the Princess' cheek. The Princess vows to cry no more. The Nurse points out her great courage, and Princess Nuala vows to be pleasant and peaceful for the rest of her (short) life as she exits.

The Princess becomes self-aware in this short scene. Now that her early death is predicted, she can look at the little time she has left and at the time she spent up until now, and she can see that her life has little meaning. She vows to improve. When Lady Gregory calls this "The Awakening of a Soul" this is this moment that I think of immediately.

Act Two Scene Two (Nurse and Dall Glic)

Dall Glic enters to speak with the Nurse. She tells her that the Queen has taken the King, who is feeling badly about their argument, out for exercise. The Nurse points out how much power the Queen has over the King. Dall Glic shares her fear of the Queen. The Nurse hears the Queen coming.

Here we have a special treat in seeing two members of the professional or serving class, who are friends, meet up to discuss a few things without anyone royal in the room. Dall Glic's

fear of the Queen is also important in establishing here, or else her speech about the Queen no longer having power over her in Act 3 falls flat. With her friend the Nurse, Dall Glic is able to clearly articulate why she fears the Queen so intensely.

Act Two Scene Three (Nurse, Dall Glic, and Queen)

The Queen enters and asks the Nurse if she knows how to cook. The Nurse is insulted and explains that she has always lived in castles with very good cooks, and that cooking is below her station. The Queen confesses she messed up with the cook situation. Dall Glic calls to a man in the hallway who looks like a cook. The Queen is pleased to hear that a cook is in the castle.

I consider this the pivot scene of the Queen. This is the first time that we hear the Queen admit that she was mistaken, and that she pushed the King too far about his diet, and that now she is in a jam. Because she admits this, the Nurse, being so motherly and caring, softens toward her. Right after this softening occurs, Dall Glic pushes the plot forward by discovering a “man with the appearance of a cook.” It is also important to note that after the King’s oath, we have three scenes where the women respond, connecting and sharing their thoughts and feelings while they try to find a way to move forward together.

Act Two Scene Four (Nurse, Dall Glic, Queen, and King Manus)

The Nurse looks into the hallway and comments that she’s not sure he’s suitable, but the Queen insists that he come in. Manus explains that he is a cook looking for work. The Queen interrogates him about his needs; she is satisfied by his answers and leaves to go get the King, leaving the Nurse to make sure that Manus doesn’t leave.

Our introduction to Manus in disguise is lovely. We see a confident man, clearly unsure how to apply for a job as a cook, and the three women are in awe of him. The Queen plays her Court of Alban card, but Manus is able to top her by stating that he is from the Court of Sorcha. He instantly has their attention. The energy that comes from naming Sorcha propels the action of Act 2 into a less melancholy realm.

Act Two Scene Five (Nurse and King Manus)

Having heard the cook say that he used to work for the King of Sorcha, the Nurse asks him to tell her all about King Manus. She keeps cutting him off, even though he is trying to tell her that he is King Manus, in disguise as a cook. He finally reveals who he is to her, and she is thrilled. She claims that she recognized him the whole time, which of course she did not. Manus shares how he came upon the cook disguise at a tailor's home, where he left behind his kingly dress. The Nurse would rather see him come in his kingly clothes, or in a different disguise. King Manus tells the Nurse that he had a dream that the Princess was in trouble, so he rushed here to help. He chose a disguise so that the Princess would not feel bound to him, if he does save her. He's only here to save her, and then he'll be off again. Manus makes the Nurse promise not to tell anyone. She wants to tell the Princess, but Manus makes her swear, which she does. The Nurse wants to know how he'll keep up the disguise, since he can't cook. Manus shows her his magic whistle, given to him by his fairy godmother, which can produce anything he wants. He mentions that it can even produce a coconut.

This scene is great fun in seeing how Manus is able to recognize the Nurse, but that the Nurse struggles to recognize Manus, after all, she did last see him when he was only 5 years old (his 22 years minus Nuala's 17, assuming that she didn't work for another royal family in-

between). We see that Manus is kindly and gentle to the Nurse, even when he is frustrated that she won't listen to him for a moment. Here we also hear about Manus' fairy whistle for the first time, which sets up the two fairy scenes to come.

Act Two Scene Six (Nurse, King Manus, King, Queen, Princess Nuala, and Dall Glic)

The Queen shares the good news with the King, that she's found a cook. He asks her how his cooking is, and she has no idea. Manus says that he can make a dinner to please himself, which the Princess finds clever. The King and Manus talk about food. Dall Glic points out that there is no food down in the kitchen. Manus says that he can have animals fetch food. The Queen says that she'll go with him to the kitchen to tell him what to do. Manus says, no, that he will set up shop in the royal parlor.

The King is very interested in Manus, as his hunger is great. The Queen is more humble in this scene, now that she has undergone her change of perspective. The Princess is curious about Manus, though she only speaks one line to him, in praise. This scene is about gearing up for the upcoming magic.

Act Two Scene Seven (Nurse, King Manus, King, Queen, Princess Nuala, Dall Glic, and Fairies)

King Manus blows his magic whistle and three fairies enter with pots and pans. Everyone is in wonder of these people. Manus gives a long oration about how wonderful and noble cooks are. Manus then starts assigning tasks. He has the Queen pluck silver feathers from a phoenix. He has the King stir a pot. He is about to assign cake making to the Princess, except that he fears her hands aren't clean enough, which insults her. Manus then takes out eggs, which he breaks on the floor on accident. Manus pulls Princess Nuala aside to tell her the warning he had in his dream. They are interrupted by the Housekeeper.

Here are our fairies! They show Manus to be very powerful, as he can summon magical creatures who then do his bidding without mischief. This is the first time a truly magical being is on stage. We have built up toward this by the magic moments of stating the prophesy, and in seeing Fintan as a person understanding magic more than mortals. In this scene we are allowed to take the style deep into the fairy realm, breaking the reality of some of the previous moments. Stylistically it was a delight to team up with lights and sound to make a magical beautiful moment on stage, while still knowing that there were more heightened moments of magic coming up soon in the story.

This is also when Princess Nuala first realizes that this cook may not be who he says he is, as he himself is not doing any cooking. She calls Manus out about his lack of cooking, causing him to drop eggs on the floor. This failure makes him realize that perhaps he is going about this situation the wrong way, and that he should confess to the Princess what he knows. She hears him, but doesn't take it all in, as they are interrupted.

Act Two Scene Eight (Nurse, King Manus, King, Queen, Princess Nuala, Dall Glic, and Housekeeper)

The Housekeeper enters to announce that a fancy coach is nearing the castle. Dall Glic is happy that a noble person is coming, as the King's oath is in effect. The Queen says that she had the Housekeeper only admit royal folk, once the King made his oath. Manus wants to know what the King's oath was. The Nurse tells him that the next man to enter the castle is to wed the Princess. Manus points out that he was the first to enter after the oath. Everyone scoffs and says that the King didn't mean cooks. Manus calls for the King to keep his word. Dall Glic is called upon to give advice. She's torn. The King offers to pay Manus if he doesn't hold him to

the oath. Manus will only take what is his due (the Princess). The Princess steps forward to argue with Manus. Manus assures the Princess that she will marry him, and that he will not wait for her. The carriage is heard, and the Queen tells Manus to leave them to greet the important man. He refuses to go. Manus is about to reveal who he is when they are interrupted.

Ancient Irish culture has much to say about keeping oaths, and here we have Manus calling out the King to keep his word, and the King backpedaling. We reach the moment where Manus will reveal all, only to have an imposter enter, claiming to be him. Tensions are high between the royals and Manus, with the Nurse trying to smooth Manus' way as much as she can without revealing what she has promised not to say.

Act Two Scene Nine (Nurse, King Manus, King, Queen, Princess Nuala, Dall Glic, Housekeeper, Taig, and Fairies)

The Housekeeper announces the King of Sorcha, who is really Taig the Tailor in disguise. The King and Queen are delighted. The Nurse and King Manus are perplexed. Taig denies knowing the cook, though Manus had claimed that he worked for the King of Sorcha. The Queen wants the cook kicked out, but the King wants him to make dinner first. Manus keeps his promise of dinner. He blows the whistle and the three fairies bring in a magical feast.

Here is our second moment with the fairies, and this time it is even more theatrical than the first. As our production does take an intermission after this scene, we are ending our first installment with a flourish of spectacle, sound, costumes, lights, and wonder. While none of the plot conflicts are resolved by this intermission, Lady Gregory has built everything to cleanly wrap up in the third act, which also has the most spectacle.

Act Three Scene One (Queen, Taig, Nurse, and Dall Glic)

Now that dinner is over, the Queen is ready to talk to the King of Sorchu (meaning Taig). Taig wants to talk to the Princess, so Dall Glic is sent to fetch her. Taig asks the Queen about the King's oath, which the Queen is surprised to hear that he knows about. Taig points out how richly he is dressed. He wants to look at himself in a mirror before he sees the Princess, so Dall Glic takes him outside to look at his reflection.

We see that the Queen and Taig have become a team, and the Nurse can do little against them. Here truly begins the conflict of the imposter King of Sorchu and the true King of Sorchu.

Act Three Scene Two (Queen, Nurse, and Princess Nuala)

The Princess enters, proud and sad. The Princess questions the Queen about urging her to marry the King of Sorchu (Taig), after promising her to the cook (Manus) based on the oath. The Princess points out that the King of Sorchu (Taig) is very rude, which the Queen says is okay, since he is a high king. The Queen says that she and Dall Glic will sort things out. The Princess refuses to see the King of Sorchu (Taig). The Queen leaves as the Princess makes her refusal. The Princess asks the Nurse to help her, but the Nurse tells her that she's sworn not to speak.

It is quite interesting that the Queen is willing to make concessions for violent and meanspirited behavior as long as it is a king acting out. Princess Nuala is unwilling to accept such ignoble actions, holding up the virtues as proper for all stations in life. The Queen and the Princess have reached a new level of tension here.

Act Three Scene Three (Taig, Nurse, and Princess Nuala)

Taig enters and asks the Nurse where the Princess is. She tells him that she left, and he wants her to go get the Princess. The Nurse asks who he is, and he says the King of Sorchu. The Nurse insults Taig and tells him that she will figure out who he really is. He gets angry with her. The Nurse figures out that he is a tailor from Oughtmana. Taig says that he will threaten the royal family's reputation if there is any delay in his marriage to the Princess.

The Nurse must use her craftiness to find out Taig's true home and career. In making him riled, he slips a colloquial phrase, revealing his origins. Their interaction is high energy.

Act Three Scene Four (King, Dall Glic, and Taig)

The King and Dall Glic enter as the Nurse exits. Taig wants to speak to the King, but he dismisses him, as he wants to nap. The King sends Taig to speak to the Queen instead. The King complains to Dall Glic about how hard it is for a king to get rest. Dall Glic tells the King that the Queen wants to get rid of the cook. The King wants to know what Dall Glic thinks about alternatives to keep the cook, such as imprisoning him, but Dall Glic is sure that the cook would not cook if he marries the Princess or if he was in prison. Dall Glic tells the Queen's plan to kill the cook in a fire. The King is horrified; he insists that he be given a rest before deciding anything. Dall Glic leaves him alone.

Here we are again treated to a scene of friendship between the King and Dall Glic, but this time Dall Glic must wrestle against her conflicting feelings, in wanting the cook removed for the sake of the Princess but also wanting the cook to stay for the benefit of the King. The King reaches a breaking point, unable to do anything more until he has napped. This is a fun remix of his situation in Acts 1 and 2 where the King is unable to function because he is so hungry.

Act Three Scene Five (King and Nurse)

The King locks the door and begins to nap. The Nurse discovers the locked door and asks who is there. The King calls that it is him. The Nurse says that she has important news. The King thinks the news she has is what the Dall Glic just told him, so he plugs his ears while the Nurse is talking and he falls asleep. The Nurse is glad to have told him, thinking that he heard every word.

Here is a classic comedy moment of all the facts being told to a person who is asleep. While the Nurse believes that she has done her duty and told the King everything, the King has heard none of it. The Nurse is able to relax and let go of the tension of Taig, but she is still the only one other than Manus who knows for a fact that Taig is not King of Sorcha.

Act Three Scene Six (King, Nurse, and Queen)

The Queen wonders why the Nurse is shouting. The Nurse explains that she was talking to the King. The Queen asks the King to open the door. She threatens to call a locksmith, so the King opens the door. The Queen would like him to sign a letter that will have the cook killed at her home court in Scotland. He refuses. The King gets angry and vows that he'll take the head off of the next person to threaten the cook.

The King's nap has been interrupted and he again is on edge. When the Queen tries to clean things up the way she thinks is best, the King loses his temper.

Act Three Scene Seven (King, Nurse, Queen, Housekeeper, Fintan, Princess Nuala, King Manus, Taig, Prince of the Marshes, and Dall Glic)

The Housekeeper announces Fintan the Astrologer. Fintan enters with Dall Glic, Nurse, Princess Nuala, Taig, King Manus, and the Prince of the Marshes, as the Housekeeper exits.

Fintan is upset that something is off about the stars. The King hopes that there is no dragon, and that Fintan was wrong. Fintan is offended that the King would think that she could be so off. Dall Glic contradicts the hour that Fintan thought the Princess was born. The Queen points out that they should ask the Nurse. The Nurse explains that she was not here when the Princess was born, and that she didn't get this job until the Princess was three months old. Dall Glic confirms that the Princess was born one hour before the sunrise.

Fintan is relieved. The stars are right, and one hour off translates to one year off, so the dragon is coming today. The Princess asks if she will die this night, and Fintan confirms that if the dragon doesn't eat her, that he will destroy the countryside and all the land surrounding them. Fintan leaves. The King is very sad, and wonders if they can feed the dragon fine food and wine, as they had at their fairy feast.

Here is Fintan's existential crisis, either the stars are wrong, or she is, neither of which is okay. The others are impacted by this, as prophesy is taken as truth in this world. We see her pivot from anguish to delight when she discovers that the birth time was improperly told to her. This is a big emotional shift, impacting everyone in the room. However, while Fintan is elated to hear the good news, the good news is bad news for everyone else. The stars are proved right, and that means that Nuala will be eaten later that very day. The King becomes especially distraught, while the Princess tries to prepare to die.

Act Three Scene Eight (King, Nurse, Queen, Housekeeper, Princess Nuala, King Manus, Taig, King Manus, and Dall Glic)

The Housekeeper comes in to tell them that there has been a dragon sighting. The King proclaims that the dragon will have to eat him with Princess Nuala. Dall Glic suggests locking

her underground. The Nurse doesn't like this plan, since the Princess would be alone. The Princess would rather be eaten than have the dragon destroy the land around them. The Queen thinks that the Princess still has time to get married. The Princess would rather die than get married. Manus tells the King that he releases him from his promise, which the King doesn't care about at this time. Manus asks for the Princess' forgiveness for his poor treatment of her. He kisses her hand, then he turns to leave. Taig points out that he is running away. The Queen doesn't blame him, as he is of low birth. Manus goes, with the Nurse following him.

Here the Princess has her second inkling that Manus is not merely a cook. He takes his leave in a very passionate way. Everyone is losing their cool as they prepare for the worst, and we start to see how they manage their fear.

Act Three Scene Nine (King, Queen, Princess Nuala, Taig, Prince of the Marshes, Dall Glic)

The Queen wants Dall Glic to throw a dishcloth after Manus so that the boys along the road will mock him. Dall Glic stands up to the Queen and says that she is done being afraid of her. The Prince of the Marshes confesses to the Princess that he regrets not being trained to fight, and that he can't rescue her now. He says he will try to hit the dragon at least once before he dies. The Princess doesn't want him to enter into danger. Dall Glic gives the Prince of the Marshes throwing spears when he asks for them. The Prince kisses the Princess' cheek and she encourages him. He goes out to fight the dragon. Taig tries to slip out with him, but the Queen stops him.

This is a very tender moment, in which the Prince of the Marshes decides to face death, even without knowing anything about war or fighting, because the Princess has his heart. While the others are giving in to their desperation, he is taking action.

Act Three Scene 10 (King, Queen, Princess Nuala, Taig, and Dall Glic)

The Queen pulls King Manus (Taig) back into the room, offering him soldiers and arms. Taig rejects her offer, but the Queen gives him a sword. He notices all the detailing on the belt. Taig says threatening words about what he'll do to the dragon, all of which are tailoring terms.

While Taig is trying to escape the fight, he becomes fascinated with an ornate sword. Whether trying to play soldier, or trying to impress the queen, or both, he puts on a show before exiting toward the battle.

Act Three Scene Eleven (King, Queen, Princess Nuala, Dall Glic, and Housekeeper)

The Housekeeper enters as Taig slips away. She says that the dragon is coming, and that the people of the kingdom have gathered like they would for a fair, to see the Princess eaten by a dragon. This is the shadow puppet battle, seen through a muslin screen placed over the castle window. They note how large and scary the dragon is. They see King Manus (Taig) going and hiding in a thicket. They see the Prince of the Marshes go and fight the dragon. The dragon spits at him. The Prince lands a spear on the dragon. The dragon blows fire, but the two Aunts snatch up the Prince into their carriage. The dragon drinks sea water. A man (King Manus) goes to fight the dragon. The Princess decides she can no longer bear news of the battle.

Here we have a major stylistic shift, as our production has opted toward a shadow battle sequence. There is a juxtaposition of humor in the lines of what is certainly a scary situation. My hope in choosing the medium of shadows, which are two dimensional and a little cartoony, that the audience is able to experience both the intensity of the scary dragon, and the comedy of the writing.

Act Three Scene Twelve (King, Queen, Princess Nuala, Dall Glic, Aunts 1&2, and Housekeeper)

Victorious music sounds, transitioning us back from the shadow play. The Housekeeper rushes in with news that the dragon is defeated. The Aunts confirm this. The Princess asks if the champion is safe. The Aunts don't know. The Housekeeper says that he died. The Princess gives up wanting to live upon hearing this news. The Princess vows to marry nobody but this champion. She asks for his sword and shield so that she can cry over them. The Housekeeper gives her the cook's hat and apron, revealing that the champion was the cook. The King and Queen find this impossible. The Princess is ashamed of her unkindness toward the cook; she has lost her self-respect. She faints, and Dall Glic helps to lay her down.

We have another big contrast, this time in the mood. There is much joy at the top of this scene, as the dragon has been defeated, however, as the Princess discovers that the hero has died in the fight, she loses respect for herself and in doing so loses her will to live. These are fairy tale life and death stakes, heightened, and larger than life. The Princess does die, even though she has not been eaten by the dragon. There is a weight to consequences in this world.

Act Three Scene Thirteen (King, Queen, Princess Nuala, Dall Glic, Aunts 1 & 2, and Nurse)

The Nurse rushes in, distraught at finding Princess Nuala in a state. Dall Glic announces that the Princess has died. The King is shocked. The Queen confirms that she died of heartbreak. The Nurse reveals that the champion is not dead, and that she was just nursing his wounds. She tries to wake the Princess up. The Nurse reveals that the cook is really King Manus. The King believes her, now that he has seen him in action.

We see the pouring out of sadness at the loss of the Princess. The Nurse is distraught. The King and Queen are confused and then gutted. The Aunts have the power to help her with a remedy from their magic bag, but they don't engage.

Act Three Scene Fourteen (King, Queen, Princess Nuala, Dall Glic, Aunts 1 & 2, Nurse, King Manus, Fintan, and the Prince of the Marshes)

Manus enters, victorious, followed by Fintan and the Prince of the Marshes. Manus wants to see the Princess. The Nurse explains that she is dead, that she died of grief, thinking that he was dead. The Nurse cries. Manus regrets his earlier behavior with the Princess. Manus plans to kill himself, so that he can join the Princess in death. The Prince of the Marshes stays his hand. The Prince offers his cure, the three leaves from the Tree of Power, which is next to the Well of Healing, and they are tied together with the wool from a sheep in Fairyland (the Land of Promise). The Aunts don't want him to use the leaves on the Princess, they want him to save them for himself. The Prince explains that he loves the Princess, even though she wouldn't want her to marry him, since he is so frightened. The Prince vows to travel into the world for a year and a day to learn to fight. The Nurse takes the leaves from the Prince and calls on the planets and stars and other holy things. The Princess comes back to life. Manus and the Princess forgive each other and embrace. The Queen notes that she has made everything turn out okay.

This resurrection is the most theatrical moment of this play, which has quite a few magical moments. Through the Prince of the Marshes sacrifice of giving up these leaves of power, and in Manus' sacrifice in giving up his sword to the Prince, and by the Nurse's incantations to call upon powers, the Princess is brought back. In this moment, everyone holds

their breath until the miracle occurs. When reunited, the Princess and Manus are able to connect as their true selves, rather than hiding behind disguises and fears. I believe they are soul mates. Here is our happy ever after moment, which then is immediately interrupted.

Act Three Scene Fifteen (King, Queen, Princess Nuala, Dall Glic, Aunts 1 & 2, Nurse, King Manus, Fintan, Prince of the Marshes, Taig, and Sibby)

Taig rushes in, followed by his mother, Sibby. Taig kneels at the Queen's feet. Sibby insults Taig. The Queen asks Sibby if she knows who Taig is. Sibby explains that Taig is her son, a tailor, and that he stole King Manus' clothes. Taig whimpers. Taig explains that he ran away from the dragon to save his own life. Sibby makes him take off Manus' clothes to give back to him. He does so, weeping as he removes the coat, crown, and ring. He explains that he was just trying to better himself. The Prince of the Marshes offers Taig his own coat. Sibby blesses the Prince of the Marshes. Sibby and Taig move to leave, but they are interrupted.

Here we have an interrupted ending. We think we have reached our happy ending, but we have not yet resolved what happens to Taig as punishment. Sibby enters like an earthquake, and leaves meek and pleased, another big contrast in emotion. We again see the sacrifice of the Prince of the Marshes, when he offers his coat to a man who does not deserve it, Taig. This is goodness and virtue in action, surely. Then we are interrupted again!

Act Three Scene Sixteen (King, Queen, Princess Nuala, Dall Glic, Aunts 1 & 2, Nurse, King Manus, Fintan, Prince of the Marshes, Taig, Sibby, and the Dragon)

The dragon pokes in through a window and demands food from King Manus. Fintan fears that the dragon will eat them all. The Princess wonders if the dragon still wants to eat her. The dragon explains how Manus has changed his heart into a squirrel heart, and that now he

doesn't like to eat blood. Manus offers the dragon a coconut, which he crunches. The dragon asks for more coconuts, but Manus tells the dragon that he will have to go to Sri Lanka to get more. The Princess is delighted to hear about the dragon's change of heart. The dragon is eager to leave before they try to put him to work or to tame him.

Here we have a second false ending, to wrap up what happened to the now squirrel-hearted dragon. I love the surprise in not only discovering that the dragon is still there, but that he is a talking dragon. Once we have given the dragon something to eat, there are no more loose ends, and every plot thread is tied up neatly.

Character Descriptions

The King: Ruler of this country. Husband to the Queen, father of Princess Nuala. The

Queen is his second wife. He loves to eat rich food, which the Queen tries to discourage him from. He no longer fits into his battle armor, because he has gained weight since his prime. The Princess means the world to him. He is not the highest-ranking King in Ireland, but he is the second highest king of Ireland, just under King Manus of Sorcha. He just wants a little peace and quiet. He is loud, caring, and commanding.

Dall Glic: The King's advisor. She has one eye. "Dall" means blind in Irish, "Glic" means cunning.

She is faithful to the royal family, who he has served since before the Princess was born. She is skeptical of the Queen's ideas, and she is pretty frightened of her. She holds the position of lawyer in the King's court, giving her equal authority to the King. She is loyal, sensible, and droll.

The Queen: She is the King's second wife. She is trying to make Princess Nuala into a

lady, and to keep the King on a diet. She believes that she always knows best. She is from the Court of Alban, which is Scotland. She honors tradition. She exerts her power as much as possible without losing her cool. She is elegant, wise, and exacting.

Princess Nuala: She is 17 years old. She has led a life of doing as she pleases, and for the first time is put upon to do as she is told. She would rather live in a cabin than in a castle. She was born in early August. She grows up in the course of the play, learning about what it means to be noble. Her feelings are vibrant. She is not afraid to stand up for what she thinks. She loves her father but is frustrated by her stepmother. She is adventurous, energetic, and self-assured.

The Nurse: She has been with Princess Nuala since she was three months old. Prior to that she was the nurse to King Manus. She keeps the best interests of Princess Nuala in mind at all times. She is vocal and personable. She keeps her word, even when that is tough. She is tender, capable, and loyal.

The Housekeeper: She watches the castle entrance and announces all arrivals to the royal family. She is alert and knows all the locals. She is vigilant, trustworthy, and confident.

The Prince of the Marshes: He is future King of a neighboring kingdom. He is not as prestigious as the King, but he has royal status of his family's neighboring marshlands. He lives with his parents and seven aunts. He has been protected and raised cautiously. He never learned how to fight. In the course of the show he grows up, realizing that he needs to take his life into his own hands, regardless of the possible dangers. He has a good heart. He is timid, chivalrous, and attentive.

Aunt 1 and Aunt 2: They are sisters, dowager princesses of the kingdom of the marshes.

They believe in magic and remedies. They are always anticipating the needs of the prince and finding ways to protect him from any perceived threat or possible danger.

They honor tradition. They are formal, demanding, and protective.

Fintan the Astrologer: She is a hermit who spends her days and nights watching the stars.

She comes out from her cave only to make predictions or to follow up on them. She is on good terms with the castle. She is curious, scientific, and adamant.

King Manus of Sorcha: He is the ruler of the far-off kingdom of Sorcha (pronounced Soar-ahh-

kahh), the most wealthy and prestigious kingdom in Ireland. He would rather do the right thing in secret than make a big show of it. He is a strong fighter. He has a fairy godmother. His parents have died. The Nurse helped to raise him. He enjoys a good joke. He grows up in the course of the show to realize that his actions have real consequences. He is valiant, smart, and brave.

The Fairies: There are three fairies who are summoned by King Manus' magic silver whistle.

They are under his command and serve faithfully. They are beautiful and look magical.

They appear and disappear based on the whistle. They are able to conjure anything the whistle blower desires, in this case rich foods and old wines. One is a sheep fairy, one is an owl fairy, and one is a moth fairy for the purposes of this production.

Taig the Tailor: He lives with his mother in the countryside near the kingdom. He works

hard as a tailor of clothes. He is very aware of clothing. He wants to better his situation.

He is crafty, assertive, and self-preserving.

The Dragon: He is a scaly green water dragon from the north of Ireland. He seldom journeys into Ireland. He is very hungry. He has wings and can fly. He is dangerous and could devour the whole kingdom. He can blow fire and talk. His roar is ferocious. Manus changes his heart to that of a squirrel, at which time he becomes a firm vegetarian.

Sibby: She is Taig's mother. She keeps a neat cottage in the King's kingdom. She has raised Taig on her own. She keeps her promises. She is mortified by Taig's actions. She is feisty, honorable, and firm.

Structure of the Play

In looking at this play, even though she is not on stage the most, the central character is Princess Nuala. Everything hinges on her birth, her life, and her death. The story is set in Ireland, but a mythic Ireland, with some real places mentioned and some made up places added in. The year is not mentioned, but as it is a fairy tale, we are outside of history.

Most western plays follow the basic structure beginning with a state of equilibrium, then an inciting incident occurs, followed by a series of crisis that amounts to the rising action, which leads to a climax, then there is a resolution, resulting in a new state of equilibrium. *The Dragon* also follows this sequence.

The equilibrium which begins the show is shown by the first interaction between the King and Dall Glic. They are speaking about food, a favorite topic of the King. We are given time to understand who these characters are and what their world is like. Most of the first act is spent in establishing the equilibrium. We see the dynamic of the royal family, and we see the Princess reject a suitor, something she is famous for.

The inciting incident occurs at the end of the first act when Fintan the Astrologer tells Princess Nuala that a dragon will come from the north and eat her on her next birthday. This changes her whole world view. Now she must decide what to do, to face the dragon or to hide herself (in a marriage or in a hidden room in the ground). Because of this new knowledge, she does consider marrying earlier than she would like to. She also resolves not to sulk and cry for the next year, but to live brightly while she can.

The first crisis occurs when Fintan reveals that she got the Princess' birthday hour wrong, and that the dragon is on its way. This leads to frantic behavior from Princess Nuala's family, as they try to convince her to get married today. The Princess faces this news as bravely as she can, knowing that the lives of her people matter more than her own. Her family does not share this view, and they employ all their power to convince her to wed or hide.

The second crisis occurs when the dragon arrives. The Princess watches the Prince of the Marshes and the cook (King Manus in disguise) go out to fight on her behalf. She tries to go out and face the dragon herself, but she is held back by the King.

The third crisis occurs when it is announced that King Manus died killing the dragon, causing Princess Nuala to die of grief. She could not bear his sacrifice. This is a hard blow to everyone.

The climax occurs when Princess Nuala is brought back to life by the Prince of the Marshes aunts' magic leaves. The Nurse raises her back to life by calling on all the powers she believes in. From here, the Princess and Manus forgive each other, humbling themselves to each other, seeing the foolishness of their past behavior.

The surprise twist is when the dragon, who is not dead, enters the castle and demands to be fed. This looks dire for a moment, like the dragon might actually eat the Princess after all. She fears that even after all that has occurred and changed, that she will still be eaten.

All is resolved when King Manus feeds the dragon a coconut. Because of the changes of heart that happened, the dragon's heart into a squirrel's heart, and the Princess' selfish heart into a caring, womanly heart, the world is a better place. It is a happily ever after ending indeed!

While it looks surprising to see that the first crisis doesn't occur until the third act, thankfully we have plenty of sub-plots, vivid characters, and a mix of comedic and heart felt moments to take us from the inciting incident at the end of Act 1 all the way to our happy conclusion.

Collaboration with Designers

The graduate student, bolstered by her research and her further understanding of the script, knew that she needed visionaries on her team, those who were able to dream with her to see what this world would look like, feel like, and sound like. She gathered a team of professors, students, and an even a professional puppet designer, and they happily joined in her adventure.

First Meetings

Most members of my design team were assigned to me by the department, with the exception of Ariel Lauryn, who was my personal choice for puppet designer, supported by the department. As such, my first meetings with each of them we were able to jump right in and start talking about possibilities, answering each other's questions, and making plans. I will note how each process went with my lights, sound, costume, scenic, puppet, and props designers.

Prof. Hal Logan was my first meeting, on October 23, to discuss how we wanted to work together. I was familiar with Hal's past work, as he is often brought in to design sound for mainstage shows at the University of Portland. He is skilled in composing in addition to altering recorded sounds. I shared that I was looking for him to record and alter the sound of the Dragon's lines, though I had not yet chosen someone to supply the Dragon's voice. My other desire was for a battle soundscape to support the shadow puppet battle spectacle. I was also hoping that he would have music suggestions for moments that wanted underscoring or pops of sound before or after a scene. Hal was incredibly kind in suggesting that he would compose original music, something that I had not even thought to ask for.

We made a list of what moments were likely candidates for sound, for instance how most scenes transitions could move forward without needing sound, but the transitions between acts would greatly benefit from thematic music. We agreed that our next step would be to meet once the script was finalized, and we could note all the moments we wanted sound for. I felt very good after this meeting, as it was in this meeting that I realized that sound would play a more important role in the world of this play than I had initially thought. Hal was able to inspire me through his expertise and skill set to further dream of what a fairy tale comedy should sound like.

My next meeting was an attempt to gather as many of the designers as possible together, and this meeting was not as fruitful as it could have been. To begin with, it was Prof. Larry and Prof. Sue who proposed the meeting, and then they invited additional designers and alerted me of that later. I was pleased that they took initiative to get people together, but it made me feel like failure at leadership and communication, in that I hadn't thought to call them all together. Unfortunately, Sue was ill that day, so she was unable to attend, leaving myself, Larry, Jesi, Meghan, and Kat, as Hal was unable to attend, and Ariel was in New York (and not officially on the team at that point). While it was helpful for me to share the first visions about where I felt the show was going, it was not good timing, as few to none of them had read the script at that point. In looking back, I am not sure why this meeting was called, or what the goals were or should have been. I stand by my practice of first meeting with each designer individually before trying to get multiple designers into the same room.

Though the group meeting was mostly a failed attempt, I was able to have a meaningful conversation with Jesi Robison, student prop designer, as she had read through my preliminary

list of props and came to the meeting with many specific questions. I felt that we were able to get as much on the same page as we could before knowing what the set and costumes would look like. As the other designs became more clear, Jesi and Mikelle Kelly, our second student prop designer, were both able to adjust their props to fit into the same world.

I met with Prof. Sue Bonde to talk about costumes for the first time on October 31. Her background in fashion and costumes is legendary. My goals were to bounce ideas with her as to what the costumes could look like, to talk about which colors and shapes we were drawn to, to answer any specific questions she had about the script, and to hear her initial response. She did have several questions, including wanting to know how many fairies there would be, which I needed to verify as three. We talked about the importance of class distinctions, especially in a world that had multiple royal families. We began the conversation about how much of this world was “realistic” versus “fantastic.” There was also a component of sharing some of the character traits that we both found prominent in distinguishing the characters.

I shared with her my vision for Art Nouveau as being the leading visual inspiration. She questioned me about this, confessing that she wasn’t sure how possible that would be. I left the meeting feeling honored, as Sue is not only an exquisite designer, but also a kind and thoughtful collaborator to work with. While I was not thrilled to hear that she wasn’t sure about Art Nouveau, she was able to offer her hesitations in an incredibly respectful way. We agreed that she would consider opulence, color, texture, and layers of pattern and jewelry as possible ways to incorporate my love of Nouveau, while perhaps looking at silhouettes from Gothic or Late Renaissance eras. While I wasn’t thrilled to consider these eras, I was not

opposed to looking into them. We agreed to meet again in two weeks, when Sue would have images to show me.

I was surprised to hear back from Sue after our first meeting, in hearing that she wanted to offer a second design proposal, instead of Gothic or Renaissance. I was more than happy to meet with her on November 7 to see her next plan. I was delighted to hear that she had embraced more of my Art Nouveau dreams by setting the fashion in the spirit of the Edwardian era, around the same historical time as Nouveau was impacting visual art. We discussed color palettes, and everything she said was in alignment with my overall vision. This meeting brightened my heart, and I could not wait to see what Sue would design in this beautiful era. Edwardian was not a term I was familiar with enough to consider suggesting when I first suggested Nouveau to Sue. While I was aware that Nouveau had a limited impact on clothing, I had not considered what silhouettes to consider. Thankfully Sue is so well versed in fashion and design that she was able to translate my desires from our prior meeting into a specific era.

Sue was able to meet with me to show me her sketches on December 10. Her sketches were the images of my dreams. It was at this meeting that I finally started seeing the characters clearly in my mind, with distinctions and energies, which is remarkable to have without knowing who any of the actors would be! She added spirit animals to help in her understanding of who each character was, and it was helpful for me to have an animal to latch on to in understanding her thought process. The color palette she created for each character based on their spirit animal was inspiring; I also saw the potential in using these animals to inspire character movement. She also asked what rehearsal costumes I would want or need, which I had not yet considered. I was able to leave that meeting and thoughtfully think through what

pieces would benefit my actors. Our agreed next step was for her to source color swatches, and for me to cast the play!

I met with Kat Yo, a lighting design student on November 4. Kat had read the script and we were able to have a positive conversation about what role lights could play in this story. We talked about ways to keep the Princess in mind as the main character, by ensuring that the key moments outlined in my structural analysis of the play were the most vibrant. We both came prepared with where in the script we thought the light changes should occur, and we compared and discussed. Kat had more moments marked than I had, and we both agreed that it was better to plan for more and cut back than to prepare for less and need to add more in during tech. Our communication felt very open and stress free. I felt that Kat was well prepared, articulated her thoughts and questions clearly, and there was a sense of excitement at building up each other's artistry through our own expertise. Our agreed upon next step was to choose gel colors, which we agreed it would be best to wait until the set and costume colors had been chosen.

I was nervous about my first meeting with Prof. Larry Larsen on November 14. He teaches both set and lighting design, in addition to fulfilling the roles of an associate dean. In part these nerves came from the fact that he was my last on-site designer to meet with me, and because I sensed some hesitation from him about what a fairy tale should/could look like. Once we met, all my hesitations melted away, and we were very quickly on the same page. He had pulled Art Nouveau images that inspired him, and we were able to talk about which features of architecture and design might work well for our set. We talked about how a shadow screen could work for the shadow battle. We discussed how two doors would likely be enough, and

how several windows would be desirable. I shared with Larry the Edwardian plans of Sue's costumes. We set the deadline to have the ground plan by Christmas break, so that I could work on pre-blocking in my time off. I think that perhaps some of my apprehension prior to the meeting came from my limited knowledge of scenic design. While I feel comfortable talking in terms of costumes, and adequate in speaking about props and lights, scenic design is the area that I have the least experience. Thankfully, Larry has designed many sets for the Mago Hunt Theater, and he is able to notice the needs of a show and offer solutions. I was glad to hear that I would have time to consider pre-blocking before the spring semester, so as to maximize my preparation time. Later we discovered that this initial ground plan needed adjustment, so I was not able to use the break to pre-block.

I first met Ariel Lauryn at Dell 'Arte International School of Physical Theater in 2012. Though we had never collaborated, I knew that she was my ideal puppet designer, having followed her work online. My first call with Ariel, after she was officially contracted, was on December 16. She was my first choice for puppet designer, even though she would remain in New York until week four of my rehearsals, in February. It was a delight to speak with her on the phone, and our conversation was helpful in getting many questions answered. We also communicated a good deal by email and had already established some things by this first phone call. We agreed that having a Google Drive to share together and with the whole design team would be necessary in sharing our materials as easily as possible. Ariel asked me to consider what world the dragon lived in, whether it was the same as the characters, or if it was different. My initial response was that while the characters were in the reality of Edwardian fashion, the dragon was free to be more nature inspired with Art Nouveau. We talked about the

role of magic in the world of this story. We agreed that we should video chat Ariel into production meetings, once those began in January. We discussed the possibilities of how many things she could build in New York to bring to Portland, and the benefits of building everything in Portland. Scheduling was the biggest item to discuss, especially with my odd rehearsal schedule. We agreed that it seemed like a waste of her time to keep her in Portland when the University would be on spring break, even though that meant that she would not be here for the opening of the show. We made our proposal for what dates to have her in Portland, and from there I was able to submit those dates for approval to my faculty producer.

Having met with all my designers for the first time, or in Sue's case for the first three times, I felt that the design worlds were coming together nicely. I was satisfied, having established our trajectory with all parties before individuals left for the holidays. I knew that I myself would be quite busy with friends and family, and it was important to have everything started before taking a break.

Group Collaboration

By introducing puppets into our mix, we were afforded several interesting opportunities for direct collaboration. Even with Ariel still in New York, we were able to work together to determine design details, and then when Ariel was on site with us in February, there were some very exciting moments of teamwork.

Scenic and puppets were in conversation about the size of the windows, both for the shadow puppet battle sequence and for the dragon head puppet. While originally one window had been proposed by Larry's first ground plan, his revised ground plan included two windows.

This became a conversation between Ariel and myself, about the advantages and disadvantages and possibility of use for two windows instead of one. Ariel assured me that one window would be enough for the shadow battle sequence, but that two windows would offer some unique possibilities for the dragon head. We conferred with Larry and agreed that the second window would be able to be covered for the shadow battle, with a slide in screen similar to the muslin shadow screen, just opaque and dark instead.

The other area of discussion between puppets and scenic was in regard to the amount of masking below the window. Due to the unique structure of the Mago Hunt Theater stage, there is an upper stage and a lower stage; our production had most of our playing space on the lower deck, with a few platforms stepping up to the upper deck, though the walls were built up against the edge of the upper deck. As such, there were only 8 inches of space below the windows, not giving enough space for Ariel's dragon wagon, the structure to roll the dragon head into place in front of the window. Ariel needed 3 feet of space to successfully cover the dragon wagon. Larry countered saying that 2 feet was likely all he could offer, but upon further discussion it was agreed that as the play is called *The Dragon*, the dragon puppet needs outweighed the window's importance. Thankfully Larry was able to use his creativity and image inspirations to design a lovely stained-glass base of the window, matching the top, which gave the dragon wagon the needed space.

Sound and puppets had two pieces of direct collaboration, for the shadow battle and for the speaking dragon puppet at the end of the play. For the shadow battle, the conversation began by Ariel sharing a storyboard of what the shadow battle might look like. Hal and Ariel had a conversation in one of our production meetings, about how Hal would craft the sounds to be

individually triggered, with some underscoring loops to accommodate the puppets, so that the movement would dictate the sound, rather than composing one set sound track for which the puppets would have had to be dictated by sound. This was very clever of Hal, to recognize that the sound was serving and enhancing the movement in this battle. Once Ariel was in town and in rehearsals with the shadow puppeteer actors, Hal was able to attend one of these rehearsals, with his sound ideas, and it was truly an in rehearsal collaboration of Hal watching the puppets work, sharing sound with me, and then allowing for the puppeteers to hear the sounds while they performed the puppets. From here, we videoed the work of the puppets, so that Hal could continue to hone the sounds from his studio. We continued to update the videos on Google Drive as changes were made. It was wonderful to have Hal able to attend a puppet rehearsal and for him to be able to bring his sound into the room to play with the movement.

For the dragon's dialogue, we were able to record Prof. Gregory Pulver at Hal's studio on January 20, and from those recordings Hal was able to dragonize them by lowering the pitch and making the quality more full. Ariel then listened to the lines, and she was concerned about an echo or reverb which Hal had added in. This became a question of how it would sound in the theater, and if the audience would be able to hear the lines clearly. The three of us continued in conversation, and I was able to listen to the recordings in the theater. I agreed with Ariel, that the echo reverb was making it hard to hear the words. Hal was able to adjust and increase the articulation of the dragon's lines. From there, Ariel continued her dragon head design, now knowing what the dragon sounded like, and what opportunities she could craft into the dragon to articulate his words. Ariel pointed out how difficult it would be with such a large dragon to have his jaw move to the words and suggested instead that the large dragon eye do most of the

articulating. She proposed a moving pupil and moveable upper and lower eye lids so that the dragon's meaning and emphasis could be shown to the audience by means of an expressive eye. I agreed that this was the best course of action, and she continued designing accordingly.

Color became a conversation for all of us. Early on in a discussion with Kat, I was able to articulate that purple felt like the most magical color to me, and that green represented fear, especially as the script told us that the dragon was green. Kat was able to incorporate this into her lighting design, especially by adding purple to the more theatrical magical moments such as the resurrection and the fairy feast. Sue was able to incorporate purple as magical for the fairy costumes. She also proposed royal family colors, such as blue for the Burren Kingdom, greens and browns for the Marshes Kingdom, and warm reds and oranges for Sorcha Kingdom. Larry was then able to choose his set colors, keeping the walls and floors in creams and wood tones, with accents of royal colors. From there Kat was able to choose her gel colors, and Ariel chose her dragon colors, more green and purple.

Puppetry

The grad student had a great love of puppets. Her first TV show was Fraggle Rock, a Jim Henson masterpiece, and from there she grew to love the Muppets. Oven mitts became puppets in her kitchen. While she trained in Australia, she had the pleasure of puppeteering a giant dragon for a fairy tale play; she was positioned in that dragon's heart. When she encountered Lady Gregory's Dragon script, her heart dreamed of beautiful puppets for her production. She remembered a friend, someone she hadn't seen for seven years, whose work was puppets. The grad student sought out Ariel, dragon tamer.

After many phone conversations, a few video production meetings and calls, Ariel finally arrived in Portland! We hit the ground running, the very day of her arrival we headed over to the Shiley School of Engineering to meet with Prof. Allen Hansen in his Maker Studio. Ariel had been in communication with Allen, who generously offered to help us make Ariel's shadow puppet designs a reality with the aid of his laser cutter. The Maker Studio is a fairly new space for students of any discipline to design and create using 3D printers, sewing machines, soldering tools, and of course their laser cutter! Allen knew how to take Ariel's design files, made on a software called Procreate, convert them to the format the laser cutter needed, and to trouble shoot with the laser to figure out the correct settings for our matte board.

Our first afternoon in Portland together was a great step toward actualizing the shadow puppets. Production Manager Eric Lyness had also obtained many of the desired resources for Ariel to use in the scenic shop to build the large dragon head puppet. He had built a "dragon wagon" platform on wheels to be able to roll the dragon up to the window in the final scene. Both puppet realms were just waiting for Ariel to build!

Although Ariel and I had never worked together on a puppet project, I had been following her work on social media and on her website. I sensed something kindred about our aesthetics, and I gave her a lot of free reign on the puppets. While she knew the functions I was hoping to achieve through puppetry, I gave her very few design instructions. I trusted her to make beautiful puppets for our show. Our collaboration was one of great trust, almost an absurd amount of freedom, as usually I like to know all of the details from my designers.

The shadow puppet images were ornate and beautiful, very Art Nouveau inspired. There was some question as to how intricate the laser cutter could handle. With Allen's guidance, we

were able to achieve some very small details, which we had to poke out pieces with a dental pick, because our fingers were too large! I could not have asked for more beautiful shadow puppets.

Ariel began working with actors in our fourth week of rehearsal, working to assign the eight actors not on stage for the shadow battle into distinct puppet roles, teaching them choreography, and instructing them in technique. Her first rehearsal with them, she just let them play with LED flashlights and the puppet screen, just with silhouettes and objects rather than with the actual puppets. They explored what happened when shining the light on people from different angles and what happens when the light source moves closer or further away from the person/object. Ariel was very impressed with their ability to listen and communicate with each other, and by how far they took the first exploration.

For the rest of that fourth week, she continued to instill in them the order of the shadow puppets and how the timing would work. She cut out rehearsal puppets for them out of poster board, so that they could learn without risking the laser cut puppets. The actors picked up the medium very quickly, but there was still much finessing to come.

The dragon head puppet was constructed in our fifth week, which was a week without actors, as most of the department goes to the KCACTF festival. Ariel had reign of the shop, with the support of costume shop manager Sue Bonde and scenic shop manager Eric Lyness. She considered several ways of constructing, but landed on cardboard and Tyvek, a versatile polyethylene material used to wrap houses during construction.

The dragon head was another moment of trust. Ariel does not often sketch her design ideas; she just starts building. Based on our conversations about the play and about life in

general, Ariel was able to follow her own sense of wonder and create something that she hoped that I would love too. There were a few days where it looked like she had done very little on the outside, but I knew that she was working to make the structure on the inside the best for our puppeteers, and that she was making the mechanisms to allow the head to move, the pupil of the eye to move, and the eyelid to move.

It wasn't until her final two days of building before our actors returned that the exterior of the dragon started taking shape. Ariel continued to add on final details until the day before she left Portland, adding extra glitter and ensuring that the masking around the eyeball did cover the inner mechanisms. The puppeteers for the dragon head were as delighted as I was to see what a beautiful dragon we had. They were enthusiastic to learn the manipulation of the pupil and the lid. In the course of two rehearsals the puppeteers were able to learn the basics of operation and the choreography.

Although we only had the pleasure of having Ariel in Portland for three weeks, I am still so pleased that she was able to join us. I am impressed that we were able to teach two theatrical, technical moments to puppeteers as quickly as we did. In looking back, I did sacrifice a fair bit of rehearsal time to shadow puppet work, but it was worth it to have such a striking spectacle in this fairy tale world.

Final Product

Overall, I was pleased with the design work that was achieved to support the story. Costumes made my dreams come true, almost outshining the rest of the visual work. I was pleased that

the designers were able to collaborate so much in the pursuit of this show, and that the needs of the story were placed above any personal agendas.

While I am still saddened that these beautiful designs were only witnessed by one audience, I hope that each designer was able to chase wonder in their own artistry. When I come back to this play, I will strongly consider returning to Art Nouveau as a governing aesthetic, as I think the richness of color, texture, and the stylized natural forms suits the story. I am sure there are other art movements that would serve this show equally well, but for me, there were no disadvantages in pursuing this art movement.

Casting and Auditions

The grad student was impatient to find the actors who would carry the show. She thoughtfully prepared which scenes would help her find all 12 of her adventurous actors. In considering what made each character shine, she was able to choose scenes to help her see what she needed to see. She trusted that all twelve would reveal themselves to her in auditions.

Preparation

Casting at the University of Portland has a tradition of three evenings of auditions: first an evening of monologues, followed by two nights of call-backs where actors could read from scenes from the actual show. As I prepared, I realized that it would be difficult for me to focus on all 12 roles in one evening of callbacks. This led me to focus on half the characters on the first night of callbacks, and the second half the second night.

Thankfully the French Scenes were mostly quite short. I was able to easily find enough moments where two or three characters interact, with a reversal or shift within that moment. Finding short scenes was important to me, to ensure that I could have the option of offering an insight or direction note while still having time to see the whole scene a second time, to see how the actors received my direction. I tend to direct with gestures, sound effects, and metaphors. I wanted to see how these actors would respond which meant that having time for notes during the audition process was key.

I chose to focus on the larger and more plot important characters for the first night. This included Princess Nuala, the King, the Queen, King Manus, and Dall Glic. In order to see these five characters in action, there were also some scenes that included the Prince of Marshes and

the Aunts. For the second night I chose scenes that highlighted Fintan, the Nurse, Taig, Sibby, Prince of the Marshes, and the Aunts. I chose eight scenes for the first night, and seven scenes for the second night. I knew that this was probably more scenes than necessary, but I wanted to give my stage manager options of several scenes for each character, to expediate her ability to send in pairs and groups to me. I also sometimes feel fatigued if I have to hear the same scene all night; by hearing many different scenes I am better able to hone in on the work of each actor.

Another aspect of my casting preparation was to finish creating actor packets with dramaturg Maddie Nguyen. We had both spent significant time researching and compiling information that we wanted to share with our actors during the fall semester. We ended up with two packets, the first being one from Maddie which contained explanations of strange phrases, pronunciation guides, and a map of Ireland outlining all the places mentioned in the script. The second packet was one that I compiled for each individual character, containing quotes from books I had been using to research, to specify the style and world for them.

I was eager for the spring semester to begin, so that Dr. Lezlie Cross and I could cast our spring shows and move on toward rehearsals. I had my plan of which scenes to use on which day, and the play was fresh in my mind as I considered what qualities would be needed in each role. I was also hoping to be surprised by some choices made in auditions, which could give me additional inspiration.

Monologues and Callbacks

Dr. Lezlie Cross and I sat in the empty theater, ready to experience monologues and to see who was in our actor pool. Tuesday, January 14 brought 28 actors to us, nine of which were men.

While each of these 28 actors did very well, Dr. Cross and I were slightly concerned that there wouldn't be enough actors to go around. After monologue night, we were able to see which of the actors were available for each show, based on their conflicts. Only one of the actors was unavailable for Dr. Cross's show, while six of the actors were unavailable for my show, of which five were men. This left me with four men, exactly the number I needed to fill my male roles.

After seeing the monologues, Dr. Cross and I conferred about who especially excited us, so we could already begin to negotiate. The lack of men was something we both named as challenging, while the number of excellent women we agreed was wonderful. I went home and wrote out the cast list, to see what my first instincts were. In looking back on that list, nine of the 12 roles that I wrote down were my final casting choices. I am sure this is in part due to my familiarity with the students, having seen almost all of them in previous shows, or having worked with them on scene studies.

Everyone who auditioned was called back, a practice that the theater program encourages. It was at this point that Dr. Cross was able to take a closer look at actor conflicts, and she realized that five of the six actors who had conflicts with my show did also have conflicts with her show. This left her with only one man available, in addition to the four I had my hopes for. She was able to make a bold choice, to switch her approach to *As You Like It* to be an all-female cast. It was very kind of her to make this choice, leaving the four needed men

to be in my show. I was very thankful to Dr. Cross and the department for supporting my first choices for casting.

Casting started solidifying in my mind once I knew the four men I had to work with. Based on the strengths of each of these four, I was quickly able to identify who would best suit each role. Based on those choices, I was able to focus on the women. I was also forced to make the choice that the three gender-flexible roles would be female roles, a choice that I was delighted to make.

The second night, our first chance to give actors scenes from the actual shows, proved even more helpful in solidifying my choices. I was able to confirm my instincts about the King, Queen, Princess, King Manus, and Dall Glic. In feeling more secure about those roles, the back of my mind was active percolating the smaller roles. In looking back to my list of if I had to cast the show after this night, I had identified one additional actor, giving me 10 of the 12 of my final choices.

The final night went a little faster, as I was only looking to confirm my instincts on the smaller roles. At this point I was still very open to who would play Fintan, as I hadn't had the chance to see any actors read for that role. By the end of the evening I felt that I knew my dream cast.

Casting Meeting

There is a tradition of negotiating for actors, in part to ensure that each actor gets the juiciest role that they are up for, for example if I was offering someone the role of Fintan, who only speaks in three scenes, but *As You Like It* was offering a leading role, that actor would be cast in

As You Like It to give that actor a bigger role. I entered the casting meeting with Dr. Cross and Prof. Gregory Pulver, my producer, with every expectation that I would not get all of my first choices. Dr. Cross was very generous and did offer me all of my first choices. What we discovered, however, is that there were not enough actors to complete both cast lists.

After consulting the audition forms, to see who was willing to be in more than one play, we found four actors that we could share. We were able to cast them in both, giving them a larger role in one show and a smaller role in the other. Later on, two of these actors chose to drop the Shakespeare show, feeling stressed with the level of commitment, which was unfortunate. Thankfully, that did not impact my cast.

Even after sharing four actors, Dr. Cross and I were each one actor short; I was missing my second Aunt. Prof. Gregory agreed to give us the rest of the day to see if we could contact anyone to fill the role, as we were all eager to post the cast list. I emailed several people who had not auditioned, but who had been in plays on campus in the past. Nobody replied quickly enough, so Prof. Gregory and I agreed to post the cast list, leaving the second Aunt as a TBA. That evening I discovered that one of the actors I had been trying to contact had recently broken her phone. I was able to reach out to her in a different way, and she agreed to join our cast. I had a cast, finalized only one day before the first rehearsal! What a whirlwind.

I shared my casting choices with my designers right away, and based on now knowing who we had, Prof. Sue was able to make updates to her costume presentation, honoring the gender and race of actors cast in her visual inspiration pictures. This was a surprise for me, to see in her designer presentation, and I was so pleased to see the care and thought that she put into these updates.

Thankfully all 12 actors accepted their roles, and most of them were able to pick up their scripts on Friday night or on Saturday, so that at least some of them had a chance to glance through their scripts before our first rehearsal on Sunday. I was elated with the anticipation of working with such ideal actors. While I knew that I would be pushing some of the actors, stretching them to up their game by casting them how I did, there was not one of them that I was worried about. Four of the twelve I had worked with before, on small projects, and the rest would be new to me. For three of the actors, this was their first mainstage production at the university.

Rehearsals

At long last the grad student had her actors. This was her favorite part, sharing the world in her imagination with them, to encourage them, to discover with them deeper worlds than even she first knew. The rehearsal schedule was difficult and strange, due to two school breaks falling in rehearsal period, including the gruesome reality of spring break occurring the week before her show opened. The grad student had organized as many things as she could in advance, and now it was time to put her thoughts into practice.

Warmups

I want to mention that I am a firm believer in group warmups, especially in an undergraduate setting. Each of my rehearsals began with at least five minutes of warmups, more often it was between 15 minutes and half an hour. It can be difficult to describe certain warmups in writing, so I shall focus on what I was hoping to achieve through group warmups, and how I distinguish warmups.

I believe in three types of warmups: warmups for energy and focus, for the voice, and for the body. I tried to incorporate at least one item from each type within each warmup. I find that it is best to relax and awaken the body first, then to add in vocalizations for articulation, breath, and volume, and to end with a game to bolster the group energy and to focus together. I also find that by beginning rehearsal in a mindful, collective manner, actors were engaged from the beginning rather than warming up gradually as they work through the scenes. In a similar manner, I believe in ending each rehearsal in a specific way, almost to grant permission

for all of us to leave the space. For this show, we ended by roaring together like dragons while standing together on the stage.

Once I identified that volume and vocal variation were lacking from my ensemble, I tried to be even more intentional about adding in helpful exercises to aid in waking up their voices, stretching their tones, and increasing breath and resonance to carry their voices. By vocalizing together, even doing silly things with our voices, I hoped to develop a safe space in the rehearsal room to sound different and to make big choices.

In terms of preparing the actors physically, I noticed that these students had typical slouchy college postures in their everyday life, with a few exceptions. I tried to focus in on releasing their shoulder tension, stretching the back, and opening the body. When we added in the shadow puppets, Ariel encouraged us to add in hand and arm stretches. We were able to build a lot from our physical tablework, and I gradually saw actors as able to transform aspects of their gait, posture, and stance to go beyond their own forms to develop what shape their character needed.

Energy and focus are essential to all actors. In having a large cast of 12, I wanted to foster in them a sense of community, ensemble, trust, and togetherness. I knew that they would need to be exceptional at listening to each other, responding, and carrying the collective energy from line to line, from scene to scene, from act to act. Through these warmups, I was able to see them come together as a cast, to support each other, and to play and laugh together, qualities that I deem essential to a moving production.

Through spending intentional time together at the top of every rehearsal, I do believe that my actors were able to better engage with the show and with each other. While it was a

large commitment of time, as I mentioned up to half an hour each rehearsal, I stand by my choice. This amount of time would even be worth it if only to connect the actors to each other before beginning the day's work. Thankfully I was able to sense growth in their vocal and physical prowess, even if it was slow growth. I will continue to use warmups liberally, with future undergraduate actors especially.

Individual Coaching Sessions

I had the pleasure of meeting with each actor at least once, save one, for individual coaching. While this took up a great deal of my personal time outside of rehearsals, the work I was able to do with the actors was valuable. I believe that it was especially helpful for certain actors to have one-on-one time with me, to ask questions that they might have been embarrassed to ask in front of the others, and to try new things which then they could proudly share with the others in rehearsal. I tried to enter each session with very few items on my own agenda, and to rather meet them where they wished. I was often surprised by what questions they had and what they wanted to work on.

While I will not chronicle each session, as without knowing the actors, there is perhaps less value in sharing all the individual details, I will share highlights, overall themes, and moments that impacted my approach to rehearsals.

My King was curious as to how to play a character who so rapidly changes emotions. He was struggling to find the reality of being raging angry one moment and weepy and sad the very next, only to delightfully drop all tension one page later. I spoke with him about how in this style of comedy, nothing sinks in deeply when it comes to emotions, that all are in the heat of

the moment, and then they melt or bounce off. Rather than sinking into any particular emotion, I encouraged him to find the gestures, shape, and voice of each emotion, which are easier to shift quickly. I also suggested that he pinpoint which words or lines launch him into a different emotion, so that he could choose a big reaction to those words, which could launch him toward a different emotion.

My Queen struggled to open her voice, both to achieve a louder volume, and to add vocal variance for expression. The voice is a very personal aspect of self, and I sensed that she was not yet ready to release her grasp of her sense of self. I shared with her tips for vocal health, hoping that this would assist as she began her journey of freeing her voice. As her voice was stuck, so was much of her expression as the Queen. While her personal physicality matched fairly well with the character's, if she could not get her voice to adapt, I knew that her performance would be lackluster.

We continued having sessions and we reached the point where I knew that I couldn't let her leave the theater until we expanded and opened up her voice. I let her know that my intention was to get her audible and expressive by the end of the session, and she took a moment to get on board. I was very diagnostic in this session, sitting in the back of the theater and calling out new instructions. I had her use longer bits of text she used from various scenes, making sure to choose moments from each act. I began by encouraging her to borrow a diva's voice. Then I recalled that she had spent time in London so I had her do her lines in a dialect. Then I had her over emphasize all of her vowels, to which we added in her consonants as well. I kept throwing new things her way, being very honest with her about what each changed and what we should keep or let go of. The final one I gave her was just to open her mouth in an

exaggerated way for each syllable. She was worried that she looked wrong doing this, but I assured her that she looked perfectly normal.

By the end of this hour-long session we did find her voice. I congratulated her, reassured her, and insisted that from this point on that she give no less. The next rehearsal, other actors complimented her, and my mentors were in awe that they could finally hear her. My heart is for helping actors, and I was delighted that I was able to devote time and encouragement to boost this actor up and help her find a powerful part of herself.

My Fintan was looking for validation, which I was happy to give. She wanted to know if her vocal and physical choices were strong, and I assured her that they were. The only thing I wanted to work with her on was her emotional range. While with most of the other actors, I tried to keep them away from emotional questions, steering them into more physical and vocal choices, with Fintan, because her physical and vocal choices were already so strong, we could dig a little deeper into what it means for her to have an existential crisis on stage. We talked about why the stars betraying her was such a big deal, on how many levels this hit her, and where the shift was when she realized that she was right all along.

My Prince of the Marshes was another actor who was making strong vocal and physical choices. I found that he had a lot of questions about his backstory. He had picked out tiny details in the script and wanted to know more about the Prince's point of view based on those. It was because of his curiosity that I began to consider how Manus did change the heart of the Dragon, a major plot point that I had just accepted without thought before. Through talking it through with this actor, who wanted to know what he would have witnessed in the battle, I was able to realize that Manus likely would have called upon the fairies to make the heart change,

as that would be the third time that he called upon them in this story. We also talked about the Prince's relationship to other characters, especially with Fintan.

Princess Nuala had questions about which moments she was allowed to go fully fairy tale magic mode, and which she needed to keep light in favor of the comedy. We charted together a spectrum of her most fairy tale moments in each act. After we did this, her choices on stage were much stronger, as she saved her most epic moments for the scenes that really needed it and held back and diffused her emotions in scenes that were leaning more toward comedy. We also experimented with how her vocal choices could be enhanced with this new understanding of her structure.

My actor playing the most roles, that of Housekeeper, Fairy, and Sibby, had the most questions about the Housekeeper. It was actually in this meeting that we agreed that we should officially change her name from Gatekeeper to Housekeeper. In a similar process to Princess Nuala's, we charted her emotions in regard to fear, where her fear of the dragon began, and how it grew and to what level it reaches by the time she announces that the dragon has arrived.

Dall Glic is a difficult role to grasp, as she has status but is not royal, and how she sees some mystical things through her blind eye, yet she is not fully magical, and how she is on stage the most yet she does not have the most to say. This actor and I spent time discussing her role, and what the most important aspects of her story were. We explored her relationship to tension in regard to fear, and how she could play with tension and release, both physically and vocally.

I met with both Aunts together, as they are such a matching set. We discussed how to maintain back health when playing an exaggerated body shape, including what stretches could

help prepare them for taking on that physical shape and what stretches could help restore them back to their own shapes. I encouraged them to go even further with their vocal choices, which surprised them, as they felt they were already pretty extreme, I assured them that they were mild thus far. We also discussed how the dragon battle changes their sense of decorum, and how this impact their physical choices.

King Manus had been having a hard time with his death-bed monologue and attempted suicide. He and I looked through the script and noticed when the metaphor for the situation had changed. I chose metaphors for him, as he began by answering my first question with a metaphor, he said that at one moment he felt like he was hitting a brick wall. From there we were able to express the differences of the beats within that whole scene, and to name a metaphor for each. Then we were able to explore how that metaphor could manifest in his physical and vocal choices. I was delighted to see this scene really come alive for this actor. I think that it was some of the best work I have seen him do.

I was pleased to have focused time with each of these actors, to dig deeper, push them further, and to hear and see more clearly where each of them were at in the process. I believe that this is a good practice to have, especially with large casts.

Week One

Our first reading of the play was on Sunday, January 19. We had the pleasure of having Prof. Sue and Prof. Larry present to offer design presentations to the actors, and Ariel video called in to do her presentation. After design presentations, we sat in a circle and read through. I was heartened at how often the actors laughed at the jokes in the script. It was really lovely to

hear the script come to life with their own voices for the first time. Though I had heard each actor read at least one scene for their actual character in callbacks, it was rich to have all the actors together, with the exception of our King, who was auditioning for grad school in New York; my husband kindly read for the King at our first read.

My favorite moment from the first read and designer presentations was seeing my actors jaws literally drop, as they saw what beautiful costumes, set, and puppets they were in for. Some of the young women nearly started to cry when Sue handed them a rendering of their costume. It was affirming to see that the aesthetics of wonder that I have been chasing were impacting them as well. There was a lot of excitement in the room that first day.

Our second day we spent on tablework, sitting together and figuring out the world together. Maddie and I gave them our actor packets, and we spent some time reading through those together. I also had them go around and share the name of their favorite fairy tale. One of the last things I had them engage in was listing, this early on, what they thought was the greatest fear of their character. Their insights were tremendous. Having only read the script together once collectively, and perhaps another time or two on their own, the depth of thought they employed in thinking this question through was heartening. I knew from this that I had clever, thoughtful, insightful actors.

Our second day of tablework was spent on movement. I wanted to be sure to give time to let the actors play with what their bodies are capable of, especially in terms of embodying different energies or postures than they do in daily life. With so many royals in the cast, posture was a concern from the gate. I wanted to increase the vocabulary of the actors, adding in words and practitioners that I borrow from. We spent time on a physical warm up, something that I

continued to do with them at the start of every rehearsal. We checked in about posture, and what shape royals live within. I then shared with them Lecoq's seven energy levels, giving time for them to experience each, as well as time to talk through which they feel at home in, and which they think their character might have (Farmer).

I wanted to add in the ideas of Laban, especially to get them the vocabulary of "direct or indirect," "heavy or light," and "sustained or quick." While I didn't feel that it was of value to go into the different pairing such as glide, punch, dab, etc., I did have them experience movement based on some pairings such as heavy and direct, or light and sustained, just to give them a feel for what direction or discussion we could have about movement in future (LIMS).

We ended our evening of movement exploration with an exercise in which there was a rectangle of carpet space, and inside everything was magnetic — actors, as their characters, were either drawn to or repelled away from other characters. We also established a safe space outside the rectangle, where actors could take a momentary break if they felt things were becoming too intense. I let them explore their relationship to each other for probably twenty minutes. As they were exploring, I would say something such as, "now move toward the character you trust the most," or "move toward the character you are most curious about."

I was astounded and delighted when in talking and reflection on the work of the day, Henry, our Prince of the Marshes, said that he felt that after this rehearsal he really understood how his character feels about all of the others in this world. That was exactly my goal for the evening, and it was wonderful to hear him so clearly able to articulate what he had discovered. I was very pleased that the actors already felt that they could share personal reflections with the whole group, such as which physicality types they felt most comfortable with, and that

some other ones made them feel unsure or overwhelmed or silly. They all had so much that they wanted to share and contribute, it doesn't seem that there is any one actor who is oversharing or under-sharing. I pushed them hard in this rehearsal, but they all rose to the occasion.

I am sure that we could have spent more time on tablework, but with the magnitude of the show, and due to the strange rehearsal schedule, I wanted to get blocking right away. I knew that we would have additional tablework questions to answer as we continued, but I am glad that we went straight on to blocking. Partly I think that by diving in straight in, it instilled a sense of urgency and the need to play hard into the actors. We did not ease in, we hit everything hard from the start.

This show was unique for me, in the sense that I pre-blocked the whole script. My normal mode of directing is to spend time letting the actors negotiate the blocking organically for at least a week or two, and then I take their impulses and clean up the pictures for the audience. Knowing what a small amount of time we had, given that significant time would need to be spent on training the actors to operate puppets, and to get the timing of the more magical and movement heavy moments, I knew that I needed to at least try pre-blocking. I set a goal for myself to find at least three stage pictures within each scene, more if I thought there were more pivotal moments within the scene. I wanted to see what would happen if I gave the blocking very prescriptively to the actors to achieve these pictures, and to then let them negotiate the path between the pictures themselves. I knew that this was a big gamble, and that it could train wreck, but I wanted to try it.

We began to block in this fashion in our fourth rehearsal, giving us Wednesday and Thursday of week one to play with this method. I gave myself permission that if the first two days did not go well, that I could modify as needed. On the other hand, if this was successful, I would have the entire show blocked in four rehearsals, an absurd feat. I spoke with my actors to explain to them that this was a self-experiment, and that we would collectively see how it went. They were all eager to give it a try, and I was bolstered by their support.

With pencils in hand, we tackled eleven scenes in the first blocking day. Keeping in mind that most of the French Scenes were quite short, we made it through 28 pages of the 87-page script, which is 32%. To be able to release certain actors early, I did not block in sequential order, rather favoring to begin with big group scenes and then dismiss actors as we went along. The actors were very appreciative to get out early when possible, as they are students and had a lot of homework. I would give the actors the picture at the top of the scene, wait until they had found their spots and made notes in their script, and then I'd give them the line where the second picture was triggered, and let them write that down, and on from there. Once I had given them all of the pictures for a certain scene, we would run just the movement once or twice to let the actors find it in their bodies, and then we'd run it once or twice with words.

The first blocking day we actually got two scenes further than I thought we would, which was a nice surprise. The hardest part was reminding myself that it was okay that we weren't going deep into the acting of each scene, that we were just establishing traffic patterns. My hope was that this framework would then allow the actors to find depth in their characters from within the support of the blocking. I was pleased that actors were starting to approach me during break times to ask questions about their scenes or motivations. I was happy to answer

any questions they brought forward, or to puzzle things out with them. Their initiative in seeking out responses, especially as we were blocking in such a mechanical way, allowed us to move forward with the depth of their characters in addition to the picturization; if the actors had not taken the initiative or felt comfortable asking me questions, I'm sure that the show would not have advanced as quickly.

In the second day of blocking, we were able to block 13 scenes, adding 33 more pages to our total. This meant that in two days we were able to block 70% of the play. I was floored that this gamble was paying off. Never would I have suspected that I would have any gift for pre-blocking, nor that my actors would be able to keep focus through so many pages in a single day. I counted this experiment as a success and planned to continue blocking the remaining 30% in the same fashion.

The best part of this second blocking rehearsal was in finding the games within the King and Dall Glic relationship. These two actors had worked together on several shows before this one, and as seniors were well equipped to engage in the work. They brought in great insights, and we were able to find the humor within their blocking and lines. It was good to start to see the comedy bubbling up, as much of the rest of the blocking work was prescriptive, and thus a little dry at times.

My plan for week two was to continue with the blocking, and then to begin to move a layer deeper into the pacing, rhythm, and tone of the show. Because we had blocked things out of order, my hope was to run a few of the acts as wholes, to see if the pictures added up to create a whole story, rather than isolated scenes.

Week one felt like an exciting whirlwind. I finally had all of my actors in the same room, and the work was beginning in earnest. In looking back, I am glad that we spent three days on tablework. I know that if we had the luxury of time, we could have gone deeper together in our group conversations, or we could have spoken through the action and emotion of each scene, but I am glad that we focused on what information and ideas we needed to share before we were able to dive in. I think of this week as establishing the foundation and framework we needed to build our show.

Week Two

In the second week we continued with blocking three or more pictures per scene, and once we reached this goal, we ran each act individually, with a whole show run on Thursday. One of my goals was for the actors to begin to see each act as a whole, rather than a compilation of individual scenes.

On Sunday we were able to block nine additional scenes, 22 pages, taking us up to 83% of the total show blocked. The actors seemed to be responding well to this style and were eager to jump in and continue the work. We were able to remind actors of additional spots where the pronouns needed to be updated based on the actors' preferences. By Monday we had blocked the entire show, a feat I am still surprised at. Again, this was only for three plus moments per scene, but that is still the fastest I have ever undertaken to block an entire show.

On Tuesday we took a lengthy warmup before we ran the third act. Nearly all of the transitions between scenes worked, with the exception of two scenes needing adjustments. Both of these issues came from the addition of our platforms, and the actors not knowing

which level they should be on. This first run of act three lacked energy, so after our break, I had them run it again, giving them encouragement to play with larger energy, as the third act is the most exciting act!

Thankfully the actors received the note and did bring in more energy for their second run. I tried to communicate to them in a variety of ways on a number of days how demanding a heightened style of acting is, specifically that it takes more energy and focus than a realistic play. I am glad that I was able to have them run act three twice in one rehearsal, for understanding and flow. After this run, I was then able to adjust placement and/or tone of five scenes.

On Wednesday we took on act one. Again, the first run of it was low energy, so I had the actors bounce back and try again with more energy. I tried to encourage them to have more fun on stage, as if the actors are having fun then the audience can have fun too. I also spent a significant time working on what the opening might look like with the actors. I had not choreographed this in advance, rather I responded to the creativity in the room. The actors kindly tried everything that I gave them, and I was able to see one option actualized on the stage. It was also on Wednesday that I shared part of my heart with my actors, telling them that I believe that theater is some of the last magic in the world. I could tell that some of them were moved by my words, and that began to be infused in the opening. We ended Wednesday by working through sticky moments in five act one scenes.

We ended the week out by running act two, just once, and then the plan was to run the show. Unfortunately, there was a bit of miscommunication with our student hair and makeup designer, and she occupied more of my actors' time than I had anticipated. Even so, we were

still able to make it through the entire show with a few minutes to spare for encouragement. I found that the run went okay; the actors did recall almost all of the movement and picturization, but I knew that I needed to address the tone of certain moments and that I needed to really inspire the actors to embrace the heightened comedy and romance of the style of fairy tale. Mostly it didn't seem like they were having fun, something essential to a comedy. Instead of giving the actors specific notes, I kept them in my notebook to use for the next time we were working the scenes. Instead, I celebrated that they had run the whole show, and frankly told them that we still had a lot of work to do within the style. I take comedy very seriously, and I never say something is funny unless it truly is. I told them that they would need to earn my laughter, but when they did that it would be a true prize.

It was at this point that I realized that I should offer myself to the actors for one-on-one coaching, to answer any additional tablework or content questions they had, to get more specific about their physicality and vocal work, and to work through any difficult moments with them. The actors were delighted when I mentioned this, and several approached me instantly to ask about scheduling. I am also glad that I offered this to all of them, as there were a few challenging actors who I reached out to, wanting to push them further, and this way they were not targeted. It was also in this rehearsal that it became clear that this thesis would be all about style, and how to achieve a fairy tale realm through design, actors, and storytelling.

I was able to receive notes from Prof. Gregory, my faculty mentor, who attended the run on Thursday. He encouraged me to keep pushing the actors in terms of vocal variety, volume, and posture. He also called me out on having several important moments to the story further upstage than they needed to be, and that perhaps I could utilize more diagonal crosses

by moving these moments further downstage. This was a very good note, and one that I was able to change in the next week. He suggested that I revisit the concept of status with the actors, something that we had not spoken directly about since our day of movement tablework. All the notes he gave me were good and sound and I was able to change things to make the show stronger. I am glad that I had him attend a run as early as I did, as our feedback sessions were able to get more specific as we went along. I admire programs where colleagues and/or professors are able to give feedback during the process, rather than just responding to an end performance result.

Week Three

We boldly began week three with another run of the show, even though I hadn't given them any specific notes on the previous run. I wrestled with this choice, wondering if it was a better use of time to work rather than run at this point. Part of my deciding factor was that week three was a week in which I needed to share two of my key actors with Dr. Cross, as they were cast in both shows, and this was a week of overlap. In looking back, I am glad that I chose to run right away on this Sunday, as they had taken my energy note to heart. This run did flow more smoothly than the Thursday run, and it was heartening to see the actors taking more agency.

After the run, we were able to work moments in nine different scenes, and I had marked additional scenes that we would be able to work on the next day. I made sure to emphasize the scenes with the two actors that I would not have on Monday, leaving scenes that they weren't as prominent in for then. The best part of this rehearsal was in going deeper into motivated movement with several actors, really finding the action and making it external for the audience

to see and hear. The actors are starting to understand the joy that working with them gives me. I often stopped them because I thought of a way to make the moment more amusing, and I would start laughing; then they would start laughing, in anticipation of what I would ask them to do! It was a lovely evening.

That being said, there were two revelations that complicated things. One actor took me aside and shared that she was feeling low functioning. It was at this time that she decided to drop the Shakespeare show, in favor of giving what attention she had to our show. I told her that I was glad that she shared her situation with me, and we talked about how I was there to support her in this work, and that if she needed anything to help her situation, that I was open to exploring options with her. We also found that by giving her an on-stage activity, embroidery, that she was able to put her focus on something calming. She later shared that embroidery has proven to be a very positive hobby in her life, which is wonderful! I believe that attention concerns and disorders is a valid conversation to have in the theater.

The second complication was in realizing that one of my actors was really struggling to find and stay in the world of the play. She was using very modern gestures and had developed some bad speech habits. When I would ask her what she thought her character was thinking/feeling in a certain moment, she almost always gave an answer that I felt was not honoring the script. We did have a one-on-one session scheduled for later that week, and I was hopeful that I could help her find a way into this story.

On Monday we were able to work through ten scenes that I had noted as needed special attention after Sunday's run. I used this time to take Gregory's feedback about adding and enhancing my use of diagonals and bringing important moments downstage. This was also

a rehearsal to keep finding more fun and energy and to look at what was happening within and outside of the dialogue. Spending time clarifying and bolstering certain relationship dynamics was valuable in this rehearsal. This rehearsal was rejuvenating in encouraging both myself and the actors that going deeper and getting more specific is a joyful process. In our quest for fairy tale style, we were ever finding more in the style of voice, movement, and storytelling.

On Tuesday we had a working run of the show, though we were only able to make it through Act 3 Scene 1 and not the entire show. Again, I asked myself if it would have been more valuable to work scenes rather than to try to move through the show. I think that this day could have been either a working run or a working of scenes and either way it would have been helpful. I think having the context of doing the scenes in order has value, especially when it comes to being in the present, knowing the moment before, and feeling the momentum of the show. Alternatively, we had been running a lot, especially as early in the process as we were.

This was also the first rehearsal in which several actors attempted going off book! I wanted to give them encouragement to start trying off book, to really see how much they had memorized, and there was the extra incentive that we were adding puppets in the next week and would need to have the script well in our minds. I was encouraged to see so many of the actors embrace the challenge and at least try to get by without their scripts. I feel that by giving them the support to try to put down their books before the official off-book date, we were able to take some of the nerves and fear out of it. I would be eager to try this method again in the future on a project that the actors were not entering rehearsals memorized.

Wednesday was a more casual day, as again I was lacking two of my key actors. I spent the first half hour teaching one actor how to embroider, so that she could use that as her in

character activity on stage. It was delightful to sit with her, teach her a skill, and to see how much pleasure she got from it. We only worked on seven scenes. I knew that I had been pushing the actors a lot, and so I opted to end rehearsal early. I knew that on Thursday I would be able to see what stuck from all of our time working this week, as it would be another chance to run the show and receive feedback from Gregory.

It was in this run that I was able to realize that somehow when we ran the show, as opposed to working scenes and moments, the actors seemed to get very serious and lose their sense of humor. This is a phenomenon that I am still curious about. I'm not sure if somehow in the running that they get nervous and that is what sends them sounding serious and angry. I would like to investigate this further, in future comedy plays on college campuses.

After the run, when I explained that they had lost most of the humor, it seemed that the actors were discouraged. At that point I knew that I would need to find additional tactics to positively reinforce moments where they were embracing the humor. There were some questions of how to balance the high stakes moments with the comedic humor and physical comedy moments. I thought that it was excellent that they were able to articulate which moments were confusing them, and then I was able to address each in a case by case way.

This run helped me see that the blocking is truly done, and that all of my notes were about volume, tone, and style. It was lovely to realize that all of the focus that went into blocking so quickly did pay off, in that the actors were confident in their traffic patterns and that we were able to move on to enhancing the quality of the moments.

Gregory had several questions about my opening movement segment. He noticed that it was more realistic than stylized in form, and that it didn't yet have the quality of the beginning

of a fairy tale. Hearing this affirmed what I had noticed also, and I knew that I was getting close to making a big stylistic change as to how I wanted to proceed with the opening. He had more specific notes for me about certain lines not landing, or certain moments needing larger reactions from the actors. He applauded one of my actors and his ability to embrace the style in a genuine way. We agreed that I should give positive feedback to him as much as possible in front of the others, in hopes that the others would rise to his level.

Week Four

This was an exciting week, as we added shadow puppets into the mix! In this week my main goals were to get the actors acclimated to shadow puppetry, and for them to gain confidence with their puppet choreography. It was nerve wracking to offer so much time up to puppetry, and to trust that the actors would still be on an upward trajectory on their scenes, but to achieve the magical show I dreamed of, I knew that I had to offer substantial time to Ariel and puppetry.

We began the week with a playtime for the actors to use the LED flashlights on the muslin screen to experience how shadows work. The actors were wonderful at communicating to each other, listening and responding to each other's ideas about angles and movements to try. Ariel was impressed at the level of curiosity and technique they were able to reach in just an hour, saying that they were well past the pure beginner stage. This was extra impressive, as none of these actors had ever played with shadow puppets in their adult years!

After our shadow playtime, we were able to work through all of act one. I told the actors that this week's focus needed to be on fun, voice, and physicality, in addition to puppetry. I

confirmed with them that the blocking was done, and that they could rest in the security of that structure. Certain actors began rising to the occasion in this week, while others continued struggling. I continued giving positive feedback to those who were upping their game, while giving notes and encouragement to those who were still trying to find their comedy bodies and voices.

On Monday, Ariel and I were able to divide and conquer; she kept working with the eight actors who were also puppeteers, while I worked with the four non-puppeteer actors on scenes in a rehearsal room. Thankfully, those four actors were in many scenes together where they held the main focus. The change of room seemed to help two of them, who had been struggling with the style. I wonder if by just giving them a smaller space to work things out in gave them confidence and permission to make bigger choices? Or perhaps by having them in a smaller group instead of with everyone they were more comfortable trying new things?

This was the rehearsal where we were able to get our sound designer, Prof. Hal, into the room to see the puppets in action, and to make sound changes live with us. It was amazing to see the beauty of the puppets and to hear the epic and comedic soundscape that Hal had crafted for us. I think that it was in this rehearsal that the style began sinking in with more of the actors, in seeing one of the most theatrical moments in our play come to life.

I had hoped to have a little time to work scenes at the end of rehearsal, but puppetry did occupy the whole three and a half hours. I am glad that we were able to lean so hard into the puppetry with Ariel, and I think that this was a good opportunity for me to slowly begin letting go of certain moments that might have otherwise been overworked. It was in this

rehearsal that I realized how little time we had for rehearsal. It reminded me that I needed to be very strategic about which moments would have my attention from there on out.

Ariel and I agreed that on Tuesday we would use only an hour for shadow puppetry, and that after that I would have time to work acts two and three. In the first hour I was able to take two of my actors again to an additional rehearsal space to work on two scenes that they were the only actors in. This was valuable time to be able to leave the primary rehearsal in Ariel's capable hands to really hone in on the scene work of these two actors.

In our work through of the final two acts, the actors seemed to finally embrace the style. They were louder, funnier, and having fun. Even our assistant stage manager mentioned to me how far their comedy and fun had come in this week! It was great to come back to the moments after having a break from all but the shadows the previous day. I am glad that this show has variety, in that each rehearsal felt fresh.

Wednesday was our designer run, and I think our actors were pleased to have a small audience. Even so, I felt that around half of the funny things we had added in recently made it into the run. Some laughs were earned, but they were few and far between. It was especially powerful when Gregory or Ariel laughed, as I do admire them as colleagues so much. The shadow battle was rough, but as Ariel pointed out, they performed the correct puppets at the correct time, even if the exact timing or angles were varied. I could tell that puppets would need a lot of time on Thursday, which I had mixed feelings about, as it would be my last rehearsal with all the actors before most of them left for a week to attend the KCACTF festival.

After the designer run, I gave notes to my actors for the first time. Up to then, I had just been saving my notes to remind me what I wished to work on the next opportunity we had to

address that scene. One of the actors pointed out how odd it was not to receive notes until the fourth week. This is true; usually I incorporate notes much earlier. I think due to the precision of the timing, and the number of bodies on stage, in this case it seemed more fruitful to save the notes and use them to adjust while working on that scene. I felt that now that we were in week four, the actors should know what I meant by the notes, and most of them were possible as self-corrections rather than group alterations.

In receiving feedback from Gregory after the designer run, he was still very encouraging. He again had a list of lines and words that weren't landing, thankfully a different list than the week before, which showed growth. The biggest note he gave was in regard to the magical moments, and needing to really push the style, reactions, and majesty of these key moments. He again suggested that I take more time to enforce vocal variation and volume. I treasure these conversations that we were able to have, as often I felt discouraged after running the show, even though I often felt elated after working scenes and acts. Gregory was able to remind me of what was working, from a more objective standpoint, and it was helpful to see that often we had the exact same notes.

Ariel and I conferred, and we agreed that we would spend one hour on puppets on Thursday, and that we would use the remaining time to work through the scenes that I marked as most needing attention based on the designer run. We had also found that on the rehearsal that we spent the entire time on puppetry, our actors/puppeteers were exhausted; it seemed better to have them work in smaller chunks of time.

This rehearsal is what I have come to view as my golden rehearsal. As I mentioned, I was always looking for better ways to use positive reinforcement to foster my actors' growth,

especially in encouraging their consistency and boldness of style. I had started using the verbal affirmation “gold star,” a nod to one of my directors when I was in undergrad. Earlier this week, while shopping for puppet supplies with Ariel at a local art store, I happened upon some gold star stickers. I picked them up, thinking that it would be fun to give the actors actual gold stars, instead of just verbal ones. As we worked through my list of scenes that Thursday, I would pause and give individual actors gold stars for moments when they embraced the style and timing of a certain moment.

To my great surprise, the actors were hyper-motivated by these stickers! Suddenly it felt as though they came to life, striving for these golden stickers! Actors who I was losing faith in suddenly blossomed before my very eyes. The actors would gleefully receive their stickers and place them on their face, their clothes, or their scripts, as a badge of pride. They began laughing more at their own work, and the work of their castmates. Some would even stop after a scene and “nominate” a fellow actor for a sticker. They applauded each other for receiving a sticker. It didn’t feel like a competition between them, it felt friendly and joyful. A few of them inquired if star stickers would continue to be a part of rehearsals, and based on the growth that I had witnessed, I assured them that I would keep the star stickers coming! If this is what they needed to have the motivation to embrace the style, I was happy to oblige.

While we didn’t get through all of the scenes that I would have liked, it was a really positive way to end the week. I was certainly nervous to send eight of my 12 actors off to the festival, but I also felt that we could all benefit from a break, and that hopefully all would return refreshed and eager to jump back into the play.

Week Five

This was festival week, so rehearsals were small and short. I asked my festival attending actors to get together to run their lines together three times in the course of the week, but I was too frightened to ask them if they actually did. Thankfully when they returned, they were able to run the show off book without calling lines. So perhaps they did actually get together. While they were afar, I did still have four of my actors in town, and we got together for three rehearsals.

For our first rehearsal, I had them run the show, but we skipped all of the scenes that they weren't in. The four I had all had smaller roles in the show, so we were able to move through their scenes, for which I had them go up on stage to do their blocking, having other actors fill in as needed, in an hour and a half. These four were actors who were truly doing well with their roles. Two of the four were my gold star champions, who I was constantly reinforcing their efforts in hopes of inspiring others. The other two were my most hard-working actors, who always took the notes I gave them and the adjustments I asked for and worked hard to do the best they could. There were two actors who went to festival who I wished had stayed, because I think they could have benefited from additional one-on-one time.

The four actors I had were encouraged to move through their scenes, receive praise, and to go home much earlier than on a regular rehearsal night. I'm glad that we were able to meet together to run lines and blocking, but at this point there were very few notes that I had for them. On Monday I elected to meet with three of them for an additional one-on-one coaching session. For each, I chose one of their bigger moments, and we really dissected their voice and movement choices, looking closely at what we were communicating to the audience.

This is some of the work that I love the most, deep diving into one small moment. It was a pleasure to have the opportunity to delve with them.

Our final rehearsal of the week together, we again ran the scenes that they were in. Again, it took an hour and a half to move through their moments. They did very well and had all improved their particular moment that we had worked in our one-on-ones sessions. I thanked them all for their diligence, and gave them the rest of the week off, as long as they promised to keep looking at their scripts. I eagerly awaited the return of my actors, and our final week with Ariel. It still felt that we had a long way to go to be audience ready.

Week Six

I was startled to receive notice that one of my actors had a pressing concern to address with me before our first rehearsal of the week, in regard to something that occurred at festival. I was of course anxious to hear from her, and to find out how I could assist. I met with her, in addition to our cast deputy, a student position to ensure that the students have a peer that they are able to approach in case of feeling unsafe in rehearsal. The three of us met and the actor shared with me a conflict that had arisen with another castmate. I was glad that she felt able to share with me the details and how she was feeling. The three of us made a plan of how to continue, and she was able to safely engage in rehearsal that day.

I was able to meet with the castmate in question at the top of the next rehearsal, and we were able to make a plan for how to resolve the situation. The two of them were able to work things out. I am glad that this conflict was resolved so quickly, and without harming either of them more than the incident had caused them grief, and without involving the rest of the

cast. While this certainly could have been a frightening moment, by keeping communication open, and by establishing a sense of trust and ensemble with the cast, I believe that the two in question were empowered to say what they needed to clear the air and move on. I was grateful for the advice of my mentor, and for the cast deputy in helping me navigate the situation as gracefully and tactfully as possible, while still honoring the hurt feelings of the actors.

Riding the emotions of this interaction, and with the stress of not having all of my actors for a full week, I was about ready to weep if our first rehearsal back together did not go well. Ariel and I had agreed that it was in our best interest to run the show and then use the remaining time to refresh shadow puppetry choreography. Thankfully I did not have cause to weep. Only two actors called line, and the rest were perfectly brilliant off book. While certainly not all the fine-tuned timing moments came through, the actors felt that it went well, and they were encouraged and feeling secure. I made sure to keep a running count of gold stars, which I awarded during notes. I tried to give a star for each moment that they nailed, to confirm and affirm their work. Then I proceeded to give notes about the timings and tones that were off. I ended up taking more time giving notes than I had wanted, giving Ariel only half an hour to work with the shadow puppeteers. We agreed that it was the best use of the day, in trying to catch up from the absence, and I was happy to give her most of Tuesday. It was truly amazing to realize how little time we had left with Ariel, and that after her departure we were practically open. I tried to overly communicate our lack of time to the actors, asking for them to rise with the addition of technical elements.

Monday night was light focus, and so I was not able to rehearse, as is according to the practices of the program. I heard from my actors the importance of having that evening off, as

many of them needed to catch up on grocery shopping and laundry after the festival week. Thankfully Prof. Hal was able to join us on Tuesday night, again working to sync his sound design to Ariel's choreography, and the timing of the on-stage actors' lines. It was lovely to allow Ariel the time and space that she needed to get the puppet choreography in order. I was able to sit back, soak in, and learn. I love collaboration where we can all inspire each other. The work of Ariel and Hal alongside the actors made my heart sparkle.

At one point in this rehearsal I did borrow the four speaking actors to finesse moments from their scenes in the additional rehearsal space. I was again thankful that the four who were not puppeteers were the ones who needed the most attention. If it had been my four who didn't go to festival, for instance, I wouldn't have been able to make adjustments in the same way.

Wednesday was our Q2Q rehearsal, and I was impressed that we made it through the entire show in five hours. The magical moments took up a fair amount of time, but it was worth it to see the magic come alive through sound and lights and actors moving through space. I was anxious in the first hour, as it seemed that we were making very little headway. I appreciated Eric Lyness for speaking a phrase that I am not sure I had heard before: "The first cue always takes an hour." It helped to know that this was not unusual, and that there was hope for the designers and stage manager to pick up steam as we moved along.

As another complication, one of my actors sprained her ankle earlier that day. I had her stay home to rest, making sure that she had ice and pain medicine. She assured me that she was seeking professional care the next day and that she would keep me posted.

I felt that we were well prepared moving into the Q2Q. We had done our due diligence in paper tech, and in meetings with our sound and lights designers. I had already heard all of the sound cues, and Hal and I had even already spoken about which cues would need to be soft. The timing we had discussed in paper tech matched perfectly with the needs of the show.

I had attended light focus with Kat, so I had a good sense of what her lighting options would look like. Kat's instincts about cues were good, but both Gregory and I agreed that she had room to significantly enhance the theatricality in the magical moments. There were also certain moments where she had lit the entire space, but the moment in question had action in a smaller area. Kat and I were able to discuss the moments where I requested a change for, and she agreed with all of them.

My biggest concern at this point was in my stage manager's leadership skills. It seemed that she was still very reliant on the designers and me. I hoped that this was due to running the technical elements for the first time, and that she would improve with time.

We ended the week with our first technical rehearsal, choosing to run the show with lights and sound, as we had practiced at Q2Q. Costumes, hair, and makeup would be added in after spring break. I was disheartened to see how poorly my stage manager ran the show. It was surprising to me that I needed to remind her of the tasks that needed to happen before we began, and that we needed to pause more than twice for her to try certain cues again. Her sense of leadership had not yet risen to the occasion. I think that I kept my cool as best as I could and planned to speak with the faculty members about how best to instill a sense of urgency in our undergraduate student stage manager.

The best part of this tech run was in having a small audience, as our backstage crew attended to watch the show and get a feel for how they would support it backstage. While not all of the jokes or moments landed, it was helpful for the actors and me to see what was earning a response from the audience and what was not.

While my actor with the sprained ankle was not able to do her blocking, she was a champion and sat with her leg propped up backstage, so that she could still rehearse her parts in the shadow battle. She spoke her lines off stage, and the on-stage actors did very well with imagining that she was on stage and giving focus to where she would have been standing. This is perhaps one of the only benefits in having spring break fall between our first tech rehearsal and our costume dress rehearsal, in that this actor had time to heal a little.

After the tech run, Ariel had a small amount of time with the puppeteers, while I received feedback and we had a small production meeting in the lobby. The overall feedback was again that Kat had permission and should go further to make the magical moments shine. Gregory encouraged all of us to keep chasing the wonder and magic of the show, and to engage in the final push to make the show as wonderful as possible.

We had so little time left in rehearsal by the time I was able to re-enter the theater, that instead of giving them notes, I instead encouraged them to continue to rise with the show. I admonished them to rest and be well during spring break, to speak out their lines using their character voice every day of the break, and to come back ready to embrace wonder. They bid farewell to Ariel, with some tears.

I felt that we were not able to fully recover from our week off for the festival in this week. I had to put so much trust in the actors and the heart of the show, that despite what I

had seen that week, that the show would ascend. I would not suggest this absurd rehearsal schedule to anyone who could help it. That being said, and as this was my only option for a rehearsal schedule, I am glad that we were able to block the show so quickly. As I reflect back, if we had still been making adjustments to the staging, we would have been in awful shape. I still had faith that by adding in the costumes, finishing the set, enhancing the lights, and adding an audience, that the actors would rise to the level that I craved.

Week Seven

Not counting our spring break as a week, as the only work which occurred was me writing my paper, and hopefully the actors following my request of running their lines aloud each day, week seven brought us our final tech rehearsals and a health crisis. As our last tech rehearsal before spring break was mostly spent in getting our student stage manager acclimated to the cues, and allowing our student lighting designer to adapt and reprogram certain cues, I made a list of items that I wanted to work with actors given the chance at costume dress.

Our first Sunday back from spring break added costumes. I had seen most articles of clothing in the costume shop, but seeing them on the actors, under the lights, they were miraculous. The actors were so pleased to be wearing such works of art. Life was rushing into the show. We did begin the run an hour late, mostly due to pauses between the items on the list of pre-show crew tasks. I tried to be patient with my student stage manager, as she had few mentors to help her grow in her process. I expediated where I could, and the run went quite well. After the run I was able to work on five small moments: the curtain call (Hal had composed a track with the main character's themes, so timing was important), getting in and

out of the shadow battle (in terms of lights), the pillow fight (now that we finally had pillows!), moving the bench in anticipation of the Princess' death, and updating the blocking for my actor with a sprained ankle. I was heartened that the actors didn't lose much over the week off. I think that the costumes elevated their sense of character.

Monday brought us wigs and makeup. The characters now had their full looks. Our stage manager had a better grasp on the pre-show tasks, and we began fifteen minutes later than scheduled, much better than an hour late the day before. The run went well, and afterward the designers and I had a short production meeting while the actors got out of costumes and wigs. Gregory, as producer, gave his biggest notes, and we all agreed on the last details that would push the show to the next level. After the meeting we were able to adjust the timing as to how a few of the cues were called to better match the action. We also gave our lighting designer a chance to adjust a few additional lighting moments with the actors present so that we could see the result. The rest of my notes were emailed out, a practice I had started using in tech week.

It was all a whirlwind, but we made it to our final dress rehearsal on Tuesday. Each night of tech I had adjusted the fight call list, to include cues that had changed the night before, to add in any physical moment that had gone awry, and to add any last moment that I might have time to adjust. Anthony Arnista, a fellow Dell 'Arte grad, tech director at Curious Comedy in Portland and an excellent theatrical photographer was able to join us for final dress to capture the show in photos. Traditionally the university has a photo call before the final matinee, but I wanted to have high quality photos available to promote the show during performance week. I

am now so happy that I made this choice, as if not for these photos, very little of the show would be chronicled.

I think having a special audience of one helped the actors juice up their performances. This was the night where I fell back in love with this show. I knew that I was pushing the actors and that they were exhausted from so many long hours at the theater, but they shone in this final dress. We were able to get group shots after the run, and it felt as joyful as family photos at a wedding. As the actors got out of costumes and wigs, I received my last words of feedback from my mentors and designers. My lighting designer and I agreed that there were two more moments to adjust the lights for, and we went right away into making those adjustments. I gave the actors a few final notes and thanked them for all they had done. Our tradition for ending rehearsal this whole process had been to stand together on stage and roar; this final roar was magical.

I try to stay away from pre-show prep and fight call when I can, knowing that by opening night the show truly belongs to the actors and the crew. However, since we had recently adjusted a few things at the final moments of the final rehearsal, I wanted to be there to ensure that those moments would go smoothly. My actors were in high spirits, and everyone was eager to see how the audience would respond. After feeling reassured that all the new adjustments would go smoothly, I joined my friends, family, and complete strangers in the lobby. In a great show of support, my immediate family was gathered for the first time in five years, in the audience. I sat between my husband and my best friend from undergrad. It was a delightful evening, which I will unpack further in the audience response section.

The very next morning I woke to an email about cancelled university classes and events. Coronavirus or COVID-19 was raising fear worldwide. It was not yet clear if this meant all things, including my show, but a phone call from Gregory confirmed that we would not have any more performances that week. At that time there was still hope that if classes resumed, that we could perform again. In the week that followed my tech week, Governor Kate Brown has issued another decision that gatherings of more than 25 people will not happen for the following four weeks. Another week later the president of the University shut down our campus, moving to online classes only for the rest of the semester. The hope was that through “social distancing” we would be able to keep the spread of the virus down, thereby protecting those with compromised immune systems. I will be curious to see in the long run if this method of isolation was effective. It has certainly already had a negative effect on the economy, including the devastating loss of income to theater artists and companies, but even through all of our suffering, it would be worth it to save the lives of those who are most vulnerable.

I contacted my actors and stage manager, who were all heartbroken and shocked to hear that the show had reached a stopping point. Many shared with me that they were surprised and pleased that the audience responded so well. Students at the university were instructed to return to their permanent address, if possible, which meant the spreading of my actors across states. I felt that I was able to remain calm through all of the emotions surrounding these decisions.

Responses

The grad student knew that the main reason she did theater was for the audience, to hopefully lead them to laugh or cry or hear something they needed to hear. For this show, she hoped that they would laugh, and more importantly that they would smile, to find a safe space to release from the fears and troubles of the world. Though her time with the audience was short, their reactions made the whole experience worthwhile. Her second reason for doing theater was for the actors, to support and foster their growth as performers and as individuals. She was keen to know how they would respond to her survey questions.

Actor Reactions

As this was an educational experience for not only myself, but also for my student actors, designer, and stage manager. I was able to reach out to my actors after our performance, and 10 out of 12 of them were able to respond to my 10 survey questions.

My first interest was in knowing how I could improve, both as a director and for the details that they had wished were different. The areas that received the most comments for improvement were the amount of tablework and the rehearsal schedule in general. Although the overall rehearsal schedule was something out of my control, I agree with the students that the two week-off breaks, the split tech week, and the feeling of needing to jump in hard from the start were not ideal circumstances.

I made the choice to cut short our amount of tablework out of a sense of urgency in needing to get to the blocking. In considering how I would approach this play if I had the opportunity to direct it again, my first thought had been to spend one or two more days on tablework. I am glad that my actors were able to pinpoint that this could have assisted their

journeys with the show. I think if we had been able to talk through what was happening in each scene, and to collectively pinpoint big moments of change, the actors may have found the largeness of their characters earlier. While we can't know this for certain, I tend to think that the more established the foundation, the more the actors can rise.

One of my goals is always to support my actors, both as people and as artists. Nine tenths of the actors who completed the survey ranked me as "extremely supportive" with the remaining vote going to "moderately supportive." Ten out of ten responded in the affirmative that they received a helpful amount of feedback. In giving the actors notes in the form of emails after rehearsal, I wondered if they felt that received enough feedback, and if they minded that it sometimes came in emails. Two of the ten respondents ranked this as "okay," four considered it "positive" and four thought it "awesome." This to me this says that I can consider emailing notes as a viable option in the future, especially with undergraduate students.

While so much of the feedback was flattering and affirming, there were a few good critiques that I want to note. A few students wrote that because I had such a strong vision for the show, they didn't always feel that they could collaborate. With so much of my background being in devised theater, I asked myself why I didn't focus on more collaboration within this process. In reflecting, it really seems that this nasty rehearsal schedule had me spooked into holding things more firmly than I would normally. For instance, if I had been able to explore organic blocking based on actor impulses, rather than pre-blocking the whole show myself, I think the actors would have felt more involved as collaborators. While I gave them agency to try new things, as young actors they may not have felt able to explore on their own after being

given such clear blocking directions. If I were to direct this show again, in more of a standard rehearsal schedule, I would be interested in going back to my preferred organic blocking.

While I am still amazed that we were able to block the show so quickly, I knew that the actors would have a mix of reactions to that process. The survey proved this to be true. One of ten ranked the experience of blocking in four days as “horrible,” one listed it as “inconvenient,” five said it was “okay,” two thought it was “positive,” and one described it as “awesome.” I would imagine that based on each of their previous experiences in theater, based on how they like to begin their actor process, and based on their schedules outside of rehearsal, each had their own reasons for their reactions. Knowing that most of them were okay with it makes me feel like it was a good choice for this rehearsal schedule. It felt balanced that even though one found it horrible, another found it awesome. Actors all work differently, and in a big group of 12, I think it is a victory when something works for most, as long as others don’t feel unsafe.

My first survey question was “Did you feel safe at rehearsals,” to which nine out of 10 said “yes” and one said “sometimes”, with nobody responding “no.” While I wish that all had been able to say “yes,” I’m relieved that nobody responded in the negative.

I am grateful that 10 actors responded to the survey, so that I could hear their thoughts anonymously. I think that this is an excellent practice after shows involving students, and also for shows with large casts, to hear back and offer actors a chance to share their thoughts and feelings. For students, this is part of their education, and for professionals it gives space to share anything they didn’t feel forthcoming about within the process. This is a practice I will continue.

Audience Reactions

Though the house was not full, and the opening night jitters got to a few actors, their feedback was loud and clear. The audience laughed more than I had ever imagined that they would. I was delighted that they were catching on to all of the subtle funny moments we had crafted together and the layers of types of humor. It seemed only a moment and then we were at intermission. Most of the audience stayed in the theater, eagerly discussing what they had seen so far. People were smiling. It was beautiful.

I was most eager to see and hear the response to Act Three, as within 35 minutes it contained three very magical moments (the shadow battle, the Princess' death and resurrection, and a visit from the talking dragon!). The shadow battle was remarkable, as the audience was truly roaring with laughter! I cannot recall the last time I experienced that degree of response from an audience! One audience member shared that they were amused until the whale shadow puppet appeared, and then they lost it and laughed with wild abandon. I knew that the shadow battle was interesting and unique, but I had no idea what a vivid response of laughter it could provoke.

When the Princess died, there were mixed responses from the audience, a few awkward laughs, and lots of frantic whispering to their neighbors, wondering if she really had died. The magic of the resurrection was not lost on this audience, and they were smiles all around as I glanced at those around me. The best reaction of them all was when the dragon puppet entered, with smoking nostril and deep voice. The audience was fizzing. After applause filled the room, everyone in the audience was talking about the dragon. It confirmed all of my hopes, that this show still could enchant and delight, even after 101 years.

Knowing that I would only have this one audience to hear from, I asked friends and family to offer their critiques to me, and several kindly offered their honest thoughts. They had a few actor-specific critiques, based on pitch habits, diction and other personal habits some of which I had worked with the actors to try to overcome, and others that I hadn't noticed as much as they did. They offered many compliments. The one that was most helpful in considering what I would change is that the moment of shadow in the opening was not long enough for them to clearly see it as shadow, and to set up the shadow battle later in the show. I can see that this is true, that I should have been more specific in how I asked the shadow puppeteers working on that particular moment, and to set the timing of the call more specifically with my stage manager and lighting designer.

Mentor Responses

Traditionally I would have had a guest professor, connected with KCACTF, to respond to the show. Unfortunately, she was scheduled to view the show on Friday. Thankfully two of my professors were able to attend opening, and I met with Profs. Hal and Mindi Logan for feedback.

Their first question was "if you could do the whole thing again, what would you do differently?" As I have processed above, I would have spent longer on tablework, hopefully had a more customary rehearsal schedule, and based on both of those factors, to be able to give the actors a better sense of agency and ownership.

Mindi felt that the show was successful in staging and spectacle, but that the script was still hard to follow in places. She viewed the lights and costumes as adding visibly to the magical

world. As acting professor, she wished that the acting had been “more truthful.” We agreed that part of that was likely opening night nerves, but I see where she was coming from. I expect my actors to find their own justifications in most shows, and I leave them to that area of their craft. I can see how additional tablework could have set them up for more success on their own in this aspect.

All three of us mused upon how rehearsals could have gone more smoothly if my puppeteers for the shadow battle had not been actors in the play. While I would have been hard pressed to find eight additional people within our department to assist, if I had been able to it would have really freed me up to rehearse scenes and moments while Ariel worked on puppet choreography. If I was to do this show and had the budget for 12 actors and eight puppeteers (or perhaps we could have made do with fewer puppeteers if we had professionals), I would consider that a boon. While I was delighted to expose eight of my actors to puppetry, and stand by the decision for this production, in future I could imagine things going more smoothly if we separated those distinctions.

Overall, Mindi and Hal were very supportive of the production, and laughed and enjoyed themselves at the show. They were able to celebrate my victories, and to point out which areas could have used more attention to detail.

Reflection

The grad student kept dreaming of dragons. She sipped mystic dragon tea, a gift from her actors, and she took time to reflect on what this process meant to her. What would she hold within her from this story?

Did I achieve my goals?

When I first had this show approved, on St. Valentine's Day 2019, I knew there would be big challenges. I wondered how I would manage such a large cast. I wondered if the story would still work for a modern audience. I wondered how I could move forward in such a way as to limit the amount of stress that I took on or put on my actors.

I wanted the show to cause laughter and smiles. It did. I wanted my actors to feel safe, and they did. I wanted to encourage them and support them, and I did. I wanted to create an Art Nouveau fairy tale wonderland, and my designers, especially Sue and Ariel, rose to the challenge alongside me. Given all of the obstacles we faced, my actors and designers and I persevered. Nobody gave up hope, and we supported each other. That is how I do theater, and how I will continue to make theater.

While I would feel better if I had more audience feedback, especially the opportunity to try it out on a young audience, I am thankful for the time and space to engage with this story and write this paper. I feel that I am not finished with this show, though I am done with this production.

What applies to my future work?

I love style. I love magic. I love fairy tales. Any opportunity to work on a show with even one of these will feed my artistry, and the opportunity to work on a show with all three was a dream. I see other Lady Gregory plays in my future, especially a remount of *The Dragon* and taking on *The Golden Apple*. I would love to collaborate with puppet designers in the future, especially if I were to have the pleasure of working with Ariel again.

I have a passion for working with undergraduate actors. I would adore the chance to work with them in the future, be they University of Portland students or others. It is truly remarkable to see how much they grow, as individuals and as a group, from day one to closing night. I love their creativity, their questions, and their willingness to try new things. I will be seeking out opportunities in the greater Portland area in the hopes that I have the pleasure of teaching and/or directing at a college or university soon.

Young audience theater is another area that I see myself pursuing. While I didn't have the opportunity of trying this production out on the 60 Fifth Graders who had been signed up to attend a special student matinee, I still posit that a young audience would have enjoyed this show. Perhaps I will have the opportunity to test that soon. I have a great admiration for those involved with young audience theater who make beautiful, funny, thoughtful shows.

This production was an adventure for me to see if I could successfully pre-block and work with a large cast. I was pleased to see that I was able to manage both. While I found that directing a large cast took much more of my supply of energy than I had thought, I know that I am capable. Although pre-blocking will not likely be my first or favorite mode of working, I

know that I can do it in an efficient and visually pleasing way. It seems that I may be a broader director than I had thought, able to gracefully move between methods.

When I think back to myself before I applied to grad school, wondering what life would look like for me if I entered this program, I smile because my former self was able to make the leap and try. Three years later, here I am, ready to make another leap into the unknown. This time I have such a wealth of knowledge and resources, memories and stories.

Advice for other directors who engage with this show

I sincerely hope that other directors take on this show. I believe that it has merit, perhaps now more than ever, given our health scare (one could easily consider the dragon as a metaphor for a myriad of scary things!). My advice would be to follow your instincts on what to change in terms of script and dialect. Choose a theatrically bold way to portray the battle scene. Embrace the absurdity of details like squirrel hearts. Collaborate with people who are equally invested in pursuing what gives you a sense of wonder, be that Art Nouveau, shadow puppetry, or whatever it may be! Keep wonder in your heart the whole process.

Overall, build something that you think will bring your audience joy. I believe this is crucial based on what I know about Lady Gregory; she knew that her audience needed to laugh.

And So They Lived

Perhaps this was not an “and they lived happily ever after” show. If you consider how the Grimm Brothers ended their tales, it is the German phrase, “Und wenn sie nicht gestorben sind, dann leben sie noch heute...” translated to “And if they did not die, then they are living today,” which the grad student knew because she had studied German. Strangely enough, if you put that phrase into a German to English Google Translator, it will tell you that it means “And they all lived happily ever after.” They did all live, the grad student mused, and more than lived, as all the individuals also put forth a story that lived in time and space and was more than the sum of its parts. The story was so joyful, even if the ending was a bit bitter, the overall experience was magical.

And, as all storytellers know, though endings are important they always lead to new beginnings. This chapter of her life had come to a close, and she had learned so many things. Now it was time to pursue the next adventure.

Appendixes

Appendix One: Sample of the Edited Script

Act 2 Scene 6 Side by Side comparison

1919 Original Version

Queen:

And who, will you tell me, is Fintan?

Dall Glic:

Anyone that never heard tell of Fintan
never heard anything at all.

Queen:

His name was not up on the tablets of big
men at the King of Alban's Court, or of
Britain.

Nurse:

Ah, sure in those countries they are without
religion or belief.

Queen:

Is it that there was a prophecy?

King:

Don't mind it. What are prophecies? Don't
we hear them every day of the week? And if
one comes true there may be seven blind
and come to nothing.

Queen:

(To Dall Glic.) I must get to the root of this,
and the handle. Who, now, is Fintan?

Dall Glic:

He is an astrologer, and understanding the
nature of the stars.

2020 Edited Version

QUEEN:

And who, will you tell me, is Fintan?

DALL GLIC:

Anyone who never heard of Fintan never
heard anything at all.

QUEEN:

Her name was not up on the tablets of great
people at the King of Alban's Court, or of
Britain.

NURSE:

Ah, in those countries they are without
religion or belief.

QUEEN:

Is it that there was a prophecy?

KING:

Don't mind it. What are prophecies? Don't
we hear them every day of the week? And if
one comes true there may be seven blind
and come to nothing.

QUEEN:

(To Dall Glic.) I must get to the root of this,
and the handle. Who, now, is Fintan?

DALL GLIC:

She is an astrologer, and she understands
the nature of the stars.

Nurse:

He wore out in his lifetime three eagles and three palm trees and three earthen dykes. It is down in a cleft of the rocks beyond he has his dwelling presently, the way he can be watching the stars through the daytime.

Dall Glic:

He prophesied in a prophecy, and it is written in clean letters in the King's yew-tree box.

King:

It is best to keep it out of sight. It being to be, it will be; and, if not, where's the use troubling our mind?

Queen:

Sound it out to me.

Dall Glic:

(Looking from window and drawing curtain.) There is no story in the world is worse to me or more pitiful; I wouldn't wish any person to hear.

Nurse:

Oh, take care it would come to the ears of my darling Nu!

Dall Glic:

It is said by himself and the heavens that in a year from this day the King's daughter will be brought away and devoured by a scaly Green Dragon that will come from the North of the World.

Queen:

A Dragon! I thought you were talking of some danger. I wouldn't give in to dragons. I never saw one. I'm not in dread of beasts unless it might be a mouse in the night-time!

NURSE:

She wore out in her lifetime three eagles and three palm trees and three earthen ditches. She dwells presently down in a cleft of the rocks beyond, that way she can be watching the stars through the daytime.

DALL GLIC:

She prophesied in a prophecy, and it is written in clean letters in the King's yew-tree box.

KING:

It is best to keep it out of sight. What will be, will be; and, if not, what's the use troubling our minds?

QUEEN:

Sound it out to me.

DALL GLIC:

There is no story in the world that is worse to me or more pitiful; I wouldn't wish any person to hear it.

NURSE:

Oh, take care it would come to the ears of my darling Nu!

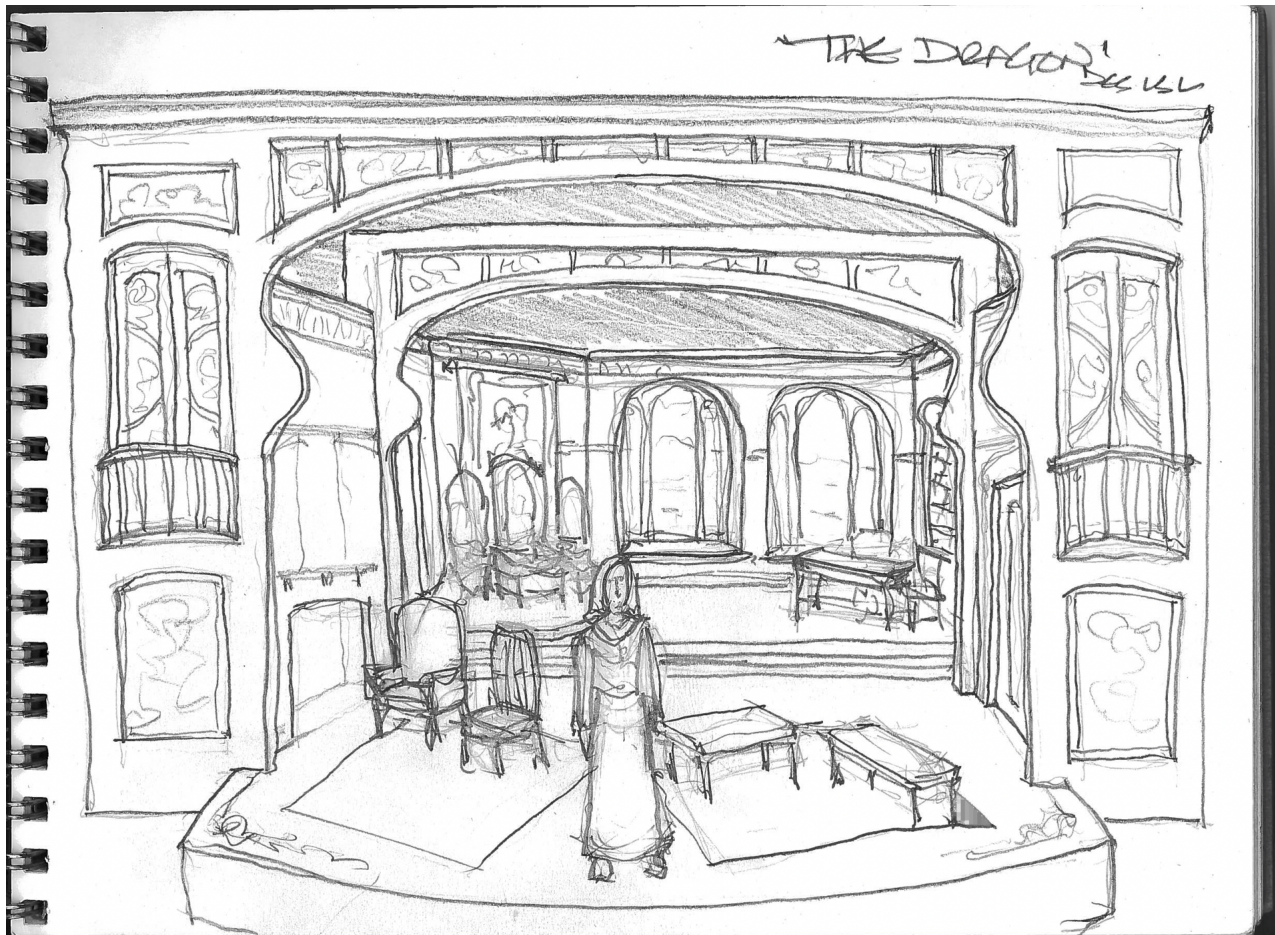
DALL GLIC:

It is said by herself and the heavens that in a year from this day the King's daughter will be brought away and devoured by a scaly Green Dragon that will come from the North of the World.

QUEEN:

A Dragon! I thought you were talking of some danger. I wouldn't give in to dragons. I never saw one. I'm not in dread of beasts, unless it might be a mouse in the night-time!

Appendix Two: Design Images



-Set Sketch by Larry Larsen
January 2020

Costume Renderings by Sue Bonde 2020







Photography by Anthony Arnista March 2020











Appendix Three: ATU 300 and Lore of Ireland Version

From *The Types of International Folktales: A Classification and Bibliography Based on the System of Antti Aarne and Stith Thompson*, by Hans-Jorg Uther

Tales of Magic

Supernatural Adversaries 300-399

300 *The Dragon-Slayer*. A youth acquires (e.g. by exchange) three wonderful dogs [B421, B312.2]. He comes to town where people are mourning and learns that once a year a (seven-headed) dragon [B11.2.3.1] demands a virgin as a sacrifice [B11.10, S262]. In the current year, the king's daughter has been chosen to be sacrificed, and the king offers her as a prize to her rescuer [T68.1]. The youth goes to the appointed place. While waiting to fight with the dragon, he falls into a magic sleep [D1975], during which the princess twists a ring (ribbons) into his hair; only one of her falling tears can awaken him [D1978.2].

Together with his dogs, the youth overcomes the dragon [B11.11, B524.1.1, R111.1.3]. He strikes off the dragon's head and cuts out the tongues (keeps the teeth) [H105.1]. The youth promises the princess to come back in one year (three years) and goes off.

An imposter (e.g. the coachman) takes the dragon's heads, forces the princess to name him as her rescuer [K1933], and claims her as his reward [K1932]. The princess asks her father to delay the wedding. Just as the princess is about to marry the imposter, the dragon-slayer returns. He sends his dogs to get some food from the king's table and is summoned to the wedding party [H151.2]. There the dragon-slayer proves he was the rescuer by showing the dragon's tongues (teeth) [H83, H105.1]. The impostor is condemned to death, the dragon-slayer marries the princess. Cf. Types 301, 303, 314, 315, 502, 530, 554 (Uther 174).

From *The Lore of Ireland: An Encyclopedia of Myth, Legend and Romance*, by Dáithí Ó hÓgáin

One of the oldest and most widespread international oral tales seems to have been composed in the early Middle Ages, based on elements known in the ancient Middle East and reflected in early Greek literature. It is listed as type 300. Irish versions tell of a beautiful princess who is being offered in sacrifice to a dragon (called in Irish ollphiast, or 'great worm'). This dragon threatens to ravage her father's kingdom if the princess is not handed over to it.

So on the appointed day, the king sadly exposes his daughter on the beach, tied down in waiting for the dragon to come in from the sea. A widow's son unexpectedly arrives and fights the dragon, and in a prolonged and fierce contest slays it. The king and his people can only observe the combat at a distance, due to their fear of the terrible creature, and so are not sure of the identity of the young hero. A false warrior pretends that he is the victor and as the widow's son is a retiring fellow, this warrior threatens the princess into going along with the deception.

The unsuspecting king promises the girl in marriage to the false warrior, but on the day of the wedding, the widow's son comes forward to tell the truth. The false warrior dismisses his claim, displaying the dragon's head as his trophy, but the true hero proves that he was the real dragon-slayer by producing the tongue of the fierce creature, which he had cut from its terrible maw. We may assume that this story has been known in Ireland since the late Middle Ages, as it occurs in versions of the Tristan and Isolde romance from that period in Western Europe (Ó hÓgáin 501).

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